

"There is much common ground between German and Chinese contemporary artists in terms of looking for their own identities."  
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These small embroidered bags were part of the everyday costumes of ordinary people.  
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Angkor Thom is all that remains of the last Khmer capital at Angkor.  
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Cao Yu

'I think the farmers there are industrious. They're really busy every day. Unfortunately, their avenues for making money are very simple.'

## Summer Assignment

A Hunan college student has become hot media property since writing a letter to Premier Wen Jiabao about the issue of the rural economy

By Chen Ying

Sophomore student Cao Yu, of Changsha's Central South University, hopes she can get back to focusing on her studies soon. For now, however, a quiet life is out of the question, with newspapers and TV stations from around the country clamoring to interview her.

All it started when Cao spent twenty days investigating the rural economy in her grandmother's hometown last summer vacation and later summed up her findings in a 5,000-word assignment.

"Every one in my class had to complete an assignment during the summer break on a special issue. My classmates thought the phenomenon I discussed in my article was common in rural areas," Cao said, which is what prompted her to send her homework to Premier Wen Jiabao last October.

To her great surprise, she received a reply from the State Bureau for Letters and Calls on February 9, thanking her for her concern.

### Rural investigation

Cao grew up in Taojiang County. "My ancestors were farmers, though I grew up in the urban area. That's why I'm interested in rural issues," Cao told *Beijing Today* in a telephone interview Monday evening. As a student majoring in international economy and trade at Central South University's School of Business, she decided to focus her assignment on the rural economy.

The 12-page article is composed of three sections. In the first, Cao introduces the town of Huaguoshan and its economic situation. "Through my investigation, I found that the township's debts have reached 4.5 million yuan," Cao told *Beijing Today*.

She then explores the reasons behind the town's accruing that level of debt. "Most of the debts were caused by the historical reasons since the middle of the 1990s. I emphasized that it's a common phenomenon and I demonstrated the possible negative influence if the debt situation deteriorates further," she said.

In the third section, the most important according to Cao, she puts forward some suggestions. "To solve those problems, I thought out some ideas. The most important in my mind is to change the role of the local gov-

ernment and adjust the economic structure."

"As I see it, Huaguoshan has many advantages," Cao said, pointing out that it is close to Hunan's Yiyang Economic Development Zone. "And transportation is also convenient. It's easy to transport locally produced goods via railway, road and river."

"It is a rich source of bamboo. Most local people are involved in producing bamboo mats," she said. There are actually over 1,000 small private factories involved in manufacturing the mats. "But none are large-scale producers. There is a lot of wastage and the production quality is very low."

"I believe the local government could help the farmers establish a large-scale factory. It would be easy to improve production quality," Cao said, adding that a qualified sales department would be the key to successfully selling the products. "Besides weaving the bamboo mats, the factories could also develop some bamboo artworks, which the sales department could promote nationwide, even internationally."

Cao's article also stresses the importance of cultivating qualified leadership. "As far as I know, no more than 10 percent of the local government leaders have obtained a two-year college degree and they lack useful training," she said.

### A tough mission

Cao began her investigation in Huaguoshan in mid-July last year, shuttling between her urban home and the nearby villages. "I also stayed in my friend's home in a village for five days," she said.

"At first, some people were really unwilling to talk to me," Cao said, describing some of the measures she took to contact interviewees.

"I attempted to talk with a leader of a local company. But he didn't want to speak to me, and said he was busy transplanting rice seedlings," Cao said she followed the man and even went into his field to try to help him. "But he refused my offer. Then I waited on the ridge of the field and handed water to him when he was thirsty. Eventually I got what I wanted."

"It's not enough to speak to the leadership to understand the whole situation though," Cao said, adding that she visited the homes of more than 20 villagers in the course of her research.

"To get more information, I

held mini-meetings with farmers on four occasions. The topics covered farmers' income and their children's education."

"The most vexing problem for me was the mosquitoes! I used up a box of repellent in five days. But it was worth it," she declared emphatically.

### The real situation

"I think the farmers there are industrious. They're really busy every day. Unfortunately, their avenues for making money are very simple," Cao said. She found that the farmers' income mainly comes from agricultural production, such as crops, raising pigs and weaving bamboo mats.

"They can't afford to buy chemical fodder to feed the pigs. They'd only make about 100 yuan from each pig if they used chemical fodder, while they can make more than 400 yuan if they just use natural fodder. But it takes twice as long to fatten them up in this way," she said.

"And one farmer told me it was absolutely safe to eat his pork, since the fodder he used was 100 percent natural!"

"Actually, the current leadership in the township are responsible and are really concerned about the farmers. They have to visited every farmer's home to collect the tax and participate in all aspects of their work, such as organizing the transplanting of rice seedlings," Cao said. "But they often can't get the tax on time, as some of the farmers are really poor."

Liu Yihu, the head of Huaguoshan Township told *Beijing Today* that the county's debt was low compared with some of the neighbouring counties.

"Every year, the township will get about 1.3 million yuan from the higher government. But that is not enough to cover the salary of the some 120 local government officials," Liu said the local government had to repay more 200,000 yuan to farmers from the fiscal allocation.

The local government has adopted some measures to improve the situation. Local party secretary Wang Wenming told *Beijing Today*, "Economic development is really slow in rural areas. And our local government now is adjusting the local economic structure."

### A far-reaching problem

"As a college student, Cao should receive appreciation and encouragement for her action. But experts and the related administrations have paid much attention to the



The central government plans to cancel the Agriculture Tax within five years, as one of a series of measures to improve the situation of rural dwellers, who make up approximately 70 percent of China's population.

Photo by Photocome

debt issue in rural areas over the past years and given some sound suggestions," said Zhang Jun, a researcher from the Rural Development Institute of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

"Though I haven't read her assignment, it's impossible to solve all the problems in 5,000 words," he added.

"The debt in rural areas is an extremely complicated issue. After rural economic reform, some original debt still remained. Due to the weak financial situation, local governments had to borrow money to build infrastructure. And establishing so-called "image" projects causes the situation to deteriorate even further.

"It's very important to distinguish the central and local government functions clearly, setting the local government affairs right in proportion to their financial obligations," Zhang pointed out that it is primarily the central govern-

ment's duty to carry out and support compulsory education.

Meanwhile, Zhang said it would make the situation worse if the local government had to lend money for construction projects to satisfy the higher-level government's requirement.

"It's another key to digest the debts in rural areas correctly. And each debt case has its own unique situation. It's urgent to undertake financial reform measures and take measures to prevent the occurrence of new debts," Zhang summed up.

### The next goal

"I have got a lot from my investigation," said Cao, "Now I know that agricultural modernization could come into being only after the farmers' ideas, techniques and markets are modernized."

Cao got a score of 95 for her

assignment, the highest score in her class. "My score proves my assignment's value. So I wanted to show it to some administration officials. And I think the most efficient way is to hand it to the central government since the problem it tackles is severe and the central government will take a uniform solution nationwide."

"Nobody knew I sent a letter to the premier until one of my classmates handed the reply to me," said Cao. "The attention from the media merely reflects how much importance the public place on agricultural and rural issues today."

Cao plans to continue her investigation into rural issues in the future. "My assignment this year will focus on rural education," she said.

(See *Agriculture Tax Cut* on page 6)

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# Social Security Fund Seeks Returns Overseas

By Zhao Hongyi

After years of debate, China's social security fund is expected to enter capital markets overseas in a bid to open new high-return channels for investment to ensure the fund's survival. Minister of Labor and Social Security Affairs Zheng Silin confirmed at a press conference in Beijing on March 9 that the ministry had obtained a license to take the fund overseas from the central government. In the first step, around 5 billion yuan (approximately \$500 million) of fund money

will be invested.

On February 17, Frederick Ma, secretary of Hong Kong's financial services bureau, met with Xiang Huaicheng, director of the National Council for Social Security Fund (NCSSF) in Beijing, urging the fund to select Hong Kong as the site for the first investments. The NCSSF is the effective manager of the social security fund.

"We have no timetable yet for the next step," former minister of finance Xiang Huaicheng told the media on March 5 in Beijing. How-

ever, he confirmed that the first investment would be made "within the first half of the year."

China established the social security fund on December 19, 2001, in order to provide financial help to 42 million laid-off and retired workers around the country. The number of people eligible to receive money from the fund is expected to reach 200 million over the next 30 years.

The fund is financed from premiums collected from 150 million working individuals and 10 percent of

money received in the public listings of state-owned enterprises. The social security's annual turnover is nearly 700 billion yuan, and 133 billion yuan has been earmarked for investment.

In June last year, the NCSSF started investing very limited amounts of money from the fund in the domestic stock market through fund management agencies. To date, one fifth of all the fund has been invested in 25 listed state-owned companies, but the moves have only generated around 6 million yuan in revenue.

# Asset Transfer Rules Relaxed for Emigrants

By Hou Mingxin

China may soon allow emigrants to transfer their assets out of the country, under a plan currently awaiting approval by the State Council, Sunday's *Beijing Youth Daily* reported.

Guo Shuqing, director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE), was quoted as saying that the plan will cover both assets owned by Chinese emigrants and those inherited here by non-residents, which largely means foreigners. He also pointed out that the scheme does not cover investment-

based emigration.

Emigrants are expected to be allowed to sell their assets, such as real estate, and convert the renminbi proceeds into foreign currency, which is currently prohibited, according to Guo.

But he added that it would be difficult to guarantee that no assets from other sources, especially financial assets, are combined with the permissible assets and moved overseas.

The total of such assets are currently estimated to be less than US \$2 billion, he said.

Guo also said that SAFE is considering a proposal to allow domestic investors to invest in overseas markets through so-called qualified domestic institutional investors, and approve foreign institutions to issue renminbi-denominated bonds in the local markets.

The Chinese economy has been enjoying fast growth in the past few years, and hefty current and capital account surpluses had increased its foreign exchange reserves to US \$403.3 billion at the end of last year.

In the past three years, SAFE has

been largely loosening restrictions on capital outflows, encouraging legitimate use of foreign exchange, and has been keeping a closer eye on the inflow of capital, particularly short-term capital.

The estimated US \$2 billion of assets transfers will presumably have little impact on China's foreign exchange reserves, but analysts said efforts should be made to prevent ill-gotten assets, like proceeds from criminal activities and those by corrupt officials, from being moved abroad in the name of emigrants' assets.

# Senior Officials to Face Economic Responsibility Audit

By Zhang Zhan

In a move to intensify the campaign against corruption, the central government plans to set up a supervision system to audit the economic responsibility of minister level senior officials, according to Hong Kong-based *Wen Wei Po* on Sunday.

The move follows last month's promulgation of the internal supervision regulations and regulations on disciplinary penalties by the Communist Party of China.

Linghu An, member of Chinese People's Consultative Conference and the vice director of the National Audit Office of the People's Republic of China (CNAO) was quoted as

saying that the audit is an important power for the country's fight against corruption.

Linghu said that the CNAO has set up a communicating system with related departments under the central committee of the CPC and some ministries to carry out cooperation in the fight against corruption.

According to Linghu, the economic audit will mainly include four aspects: the operation of the finance income; the change of state owned asset during the tour of the duty of the officials; neglect of duty and economic crimes; and capital operation condition of the government-invested big projects.

# CBRC Issues New Rule on Foreign Banks

By Hou Mingxin

The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) published a new supervisory rule for foreign-invested banks on Monday, which aims to achieve a more comprehensive picture of their growing operations as well as risk levels.

According to the new rule, effective from next month, foreign banks are required to provide consolidated operations reports on their Chinese branches twice a year to the CBRC.

China-incorporated foreign-invested banks are now required to report their global operations as a whole.

Previously, the branches made the reports on a separate basis, a system foreign banks complained was inefficient.

By the end of October last year, 62 foreign-invested banks

had entered China and opened 191 operational entities. And the number keeps growing.

According to a spokesman for the commission, the issue of the new rule has posed a challenge to continued effective supervision, and requires regulators to be clear about every foreign bank's overall operations and risk levels, and properly assess their business strategies and risk management capabilities.

He said that the old supervisory methods are not only ineffective, but have caused repetition of regulatory work.

The new rule said that requiring banks to report consolidated operations will help regulators identify common problems among their branches and the influence of their parent banks on operations in China.

# China to curb investment in steel sector

In a bid to avoid environmental, financial and social problems caused by blind investment and over-capacity in the steel industry, the Chinese government is to take strict measures with the steel sector.

The State Development and Reform Commission (SDRC) said in a news release Wednesday that the government is to raise the threshold for entering the steel sector by readjusting requirements on technology, energy consumption, safety and quality.

The SDRC said it will basically stop approval of new construction projects of steel company groups, steel mills and iron mills.

The SDRC is cooperating with the banking sector to tighten credit requirements for steel projects. The banks will no longer provide loans for those projects that do not meet industrial policy or market accession requirements.

At the same time, the SDRC has joined hands with relevant authorities to tighten examination and approval of land use of steel plants. The government will not approve the land development and construction of steel projects that are not in line with the industrial policy and development plan.

The government will no longer give tax

rebates to imports of equipment for the construction of unapproved steel projects. The central government will urge local governments to abolish price discounts on electricity consumption.

According to the State Development and Reform Commission, the central government has ordered local governments to conduct a survey of the steel industry and submit the result at the end of February.

After that, a nationwide scrutiny of the industry will be conducted to check whether laws have been violated in environment protection, land use and energy consumption.

In 2002, China's fixed assets investment in steel industry stood at 70.4 billion yuan, surging 45.9 percent over the previous year. In 2003, the figure rose to 133.2 billion yuan, up 89.2 percent from 2002. It is estimated that by the end of 2005, China's annual steel output will reach 330 million tons, enough to meet the market demand of 2010.

"This indicates that there is an overheating in investment in the steel industry," said a spokesman.

The commission is revising its policies and development plans for the steel industry. (Xinhua)

# City Promotes Olympic Economy

By Xiao Rong

Beijing is to share with both local and overseas investors the huge economic potential brought by the 2008 Olympics by hosting an investment conference on April 18 and 19.

The conference, titled Invest Beijing - Market Promotion Conference on Olympic Economy, was announced Tuesday at a press conference held jointly by the Beijing Municipal Development and Reform Commission and the Press Office of the Beijing Municipal Government.

A total of 370 projects seeking possible investment will be recommended in the two-day conference, including about 20 key projects with an estimated investment worth of 70 billion yuan, according to Ding Xiangyang, director of the commission.

"The 20 key projects will be focused on the public bidding of Olympic sports venue construction projects, the Nos. 4, 5, 9 and 10 subway line projects, gas supply projects and environmental protection related proj-

ects," Ding said.

Besides promoting projects inviting bids, the conference will also recommend enterprises seeking possible cooperation in the fields of technology, funds and talents. There will also be promotion of some key economic zones in the city's suburban districts, Ding added.

"Between now and 2008, it's estimated that Beijing will enjoy a total investment worth 1,500 billion yuan, while the Olympic-related investment demand will be over 280 billion yuan. The Olympic Economy of Beijing will prove to be a business opportunity not only for Beijing and China, but also for the whole world," vice mayor Zhang Mao declared at the press conference.

The vice mayor also encouraged the wide participation of enterprises from home and abroad in the conference to share the Olympic-related business opportunities by cultivating some pillar industries of Beijing, including high technology, modern manufacturing industry, the service industry and tourism.

## Xinjiang Sells Mining Rights by Public Bidding

By Hou Mingxin

Mining rights for seven mines in western China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region were sold at auction last Friday, for 182.5 million yuan. It was the biggest ever such sale in Xinjiang, according to a report published on last Friday's Xinhue Net.

The rights for another 20 coal, copper, ferrous and other metal mines in the region were also sold, with around 100 domestic mining enterprises bidding at the auction, the report said.

Last December, the regional government opened mining rights to the public, allowing prospectors to sell their output. Mining enterprises from home and abroad are allowed to prospect and exploit resources, except for oil and gas, which are reserved by the state.

Opening mining rights invited investment in the exploitation of Xinjiang's rich mines. To date, 210 deals worth almost 75 million yuan have been concluded, according to the regional land and resources department.

Xinjiang has 138 varieties of mineral resources, 80 percent of the country's total. It has nine of the nation's biggest reserves, including natural gas, mica and Chile saltpeter, with high yields of oil, nickel, coal and mirabilite. There are about 3,000 mining enterprises in the region.

Xinjiang is expected to become another energy powerhouse of China after the eastern regions, which have been exploited for 50 years.

## Planning Committee Recruits Advisory Agencies

By Xiao Yingying

Beijing's Development Planning Committee has announced it will begin recruiting consultancy agencies as a means of improving its operations.

Ding Xiangyang, director of the committee, said at a press conference Tuesday that the move is intended to speed up institutional innovation and improve the scientific and democratic level of government decisions.

Ding said that the 20 advisory agencies to be recruited would mainly come from research institutions, consultative companies, accountant offices and investment banks, which are expected to provide such services as promotion and operation of investment projects, consultation on government decisions and research into government policies.

Regarding the requirements of the applying agencies, Ding pointed out that they should have good credit, adequate influence, consultative experience, proven quality-control systems and a qualified professional advisory team. Applicants from within China must possess the highest-level relevant qualification certificate.

Ding also revealed that the recruitment procedures consist of four steps: publication of information, enrollment and examination of qualifications, further evaluation and final recruitment.

Further information can be found at [www.bjpc.gov.cn](http://www.bjpc.gov.cn) and [www.bjinvest.gov.cn](http://www.bjinvest.gov.cn). Enrollments will be open till March 20.

## City to Ensure Water Source Security

By Xiao Yingying

Beijing's water administration has launched a program aimed at preventing a public health emergency triggered by the possible contamination of the underground water table. Under the program, the city's many disused pumped water wells will be sealed.

According to a report in *Star Daily* Monday, Cui Cailin, a senior engineer of the Beijing Bureau of Water Conservancy, said the project was launched with the aim of eliminating a hidden security risk and ensuring the security of water sources in the capital area.

Cui also revealed that with the launching of the centralized water supply project, more and more such wells had fallen into disuse. These wells, however, remain connected to the water table, leading to the result that even one polluted well would spoil the security of water sources of the entire capital area, which is the ultimate reason for such an action.

Besides, the covering-up of wells can also play a role in preventing an overuse of underground water sources so as to ensure the sustainable development of underground water sources.

The project is now being carried out on an experimental basis in Haidian and Changping districts. It is expected that over 100 discarded wells will be covered up by the end of this year.

## City Lowers Threshold for Societies

By Zhang Zhan

The Beijing Finance Bureau issued a notice Sunday abolishing the financial registration of newly established non-governmental institutions and societies from March 15, according to Monday's *Beijing Times*.

The report described the abolishment of the registration as good news for those who want to establish a new society or organization.

According to the bureau, recent reforms to the financial management system have made financial registration for such organizations outdated, and possibly lacking a legal basis.



# Dueling Deltas

Pearl River area racing to recover economic lead over Yangtze River rival

By Xiao Yingying

Guangdong Province Governor Huang Huahua revealed in an interview last Sunday in Beijing that his province was moving to strengthen its economic cooperation with Hong Kong and Macao in order to reinvigorate the development of the Pearl River delta and make it one of the world's most competitive economic centers.

However, he did not tie the plan to the more ambitious Pan Pearl River Delta Initiative, which was first put forward in September 2003 by Zhang Dejiang, party secretary of the province. That proposal called for creating closer economic cooperation between provinces along the Pearl River.

Those provinces are Guangdong, Fujian, Jiangxi, Guangxi, Hainan, Hunan, Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, as well as the Special Administrative Regions of Hong Kong and Macao.

Over the past decade, Shanghai and the nearby Yangtze Delta have boomed, surpassing and putting pressure

on Guangdong and the Pearl River delta.

This year's implementation of the CEPA agreement, which promises further economic integration between Hong Kong and the Chinese mainland, is likely to greatly benefit Guangdong, as the province should become the main conduit for trade between the two sides. Other factors supporting Guangdong's renewed development push are expectations that Shenzhen will become a municipality directly under central control and signs of recovery in Hong Kong's economy.

"The initiative demonstrates Guangdong's real ambition – to compete with Shanghai and the Yangtze River delta for status as the fastest growing region in this country," said Chen Wenhong, professor at Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

When Shanghai's economic explosion began in the early 1990s, the city government was instructed by Beijing to share the fruits of prosperity with



Can the prosperity of the Pearl River delta extend inland?

Photo by Photocom

neighboring provinces along the Yangtze. Shanghai's help has led to the rise of many prosperous small industrial towns and zones and Jiangsu and Zhejiang Prov-

ince, but has yet to extend further into China's hinterland.

Chen Guanghan, a professor at Zhongshan University, believes that Guangdong's own

market is far from saturation and that the northern, eastern and western parts of the province should be developed before looking beyond its borders.

## Giant TV Maker On Verge of Major Reform

By James Liu

Kwok Ping-kwong, vice chairman and managing director of Sun Hung Kai Properties paid a high-profile visit to Sichuan Changhong Electric Co, the nation's leading TV maker for 13 consecutive years, on February 22.

Sources within the Sichuan provincial government told *The Economic Observer* that Kwok's visit represented the government's consent for the Hong Kong real estate giant to acquire shares in state-owned Changhong.

Kwok was not the only potential stock buyer to visit the company's headquarters in Mianyang City, Sichuan last month. The president of Universal Instruments, a New York-based multinational, led a delegation of executives on a trip to Changhong on February 20. Three days before, Sanken Electric Co. President Yuji Morita met with Changhong President Ni Runfeng, and on Valentine's Day, JoMei Chang, chairman of the board of Vitria, arrived at the company's headquarters for a cooperation negotiation, accompanied by former Sichuan governor Zhang Haoruo.

The company first implemented capital reforms aimed at reducing the state's stake three years ago when management pushed to take more shares for themselves. Chang-

hong's original goal was to reduce the state's holding to under 20 percent by seeking strategic partnerships with foreign investors, but that plan was shelved in 2002 when the central government called a moratorium on campaigns to reduce its shares in state-owned companies.

The government discussed lifting the restrictions on state stakes in November 2003. A draft policy on the issue was expected to be issued in January, but has yet to be released.

"The state's 53.6 percent stake in Changhong is hindering the home appliance group's further development," Mianyang Mayor Huang Xuejiu was quoted as saying in *The Economic Observer* on March 7. "In order to deepen the reform of this state-owned enterprise and make it competitive, we hope Changhong will be able to cooperate with international economic entities or multinational corporations. We will not set scale or quantity restrictions on the transfer of state-owned shares."

The state's presence also complicates the matter of calculating Changhong's value, a necessary step if the company is to sell shares. "Since we now have policy support for reform, I am sure our company and the government can work out a win-win plan," said Ni.

## First Chinese Mobile Service Provider on Nasdaq

By James Liu

Linktone Ltd. (LTON), a Shanghai-based wireless entertainment company, held its IPO on Nasdaq last Thursday, making it the first Chinese mobile phone service provider (SP) to list on the American high-tech exchange.

That day, the company's stock opened at \$16.5 but closed at \$15.7, a 4.85 percent drop that ran contrary to analysts' predictions that the share would soar. The company is also selling 6.14 million American Depositary Shares (ADS), priced at \$14 each with the intention of drawing up to \$80 million in investment. Each ADS represents 10 ordinary shares.

Credit Suisse First Boston, JP Morgan, Piper Jaffray and CLSA Asia Pacific Markets served as underwriters for the IPO and all hold options to buy another six million shares from the compa-

ny and 3.2 million shares from shareholders.

An unnamed analyst told the *Beijing Morning Post* on Monday that while mobile value-added services in China are worth 15 billion yuan a year, American investors are still cautious about putting their money in games and other cell phone service that have not really taken off outside Asia.

Most of Linktone's services, such as icons and screen savers, interactive SMS, messaging, adventure, action and trivia games, lunar and Western horoscopes, jokes, fan clubs and event-driven and entertainment news, are oriented at young consumers. The company, founded in 1999, posted remarkable growth last year, its gross revenues in 2003 rising nearly four-fold to \$16.6 million and net income reaching \$3.6 million.

## Chinese Banks Ready for Overseas Partners

By Zhao Hongyi

As China continues to open and reform the domestic banking industry, overseas investors are taking interest in small and medium commercial banks.

The American International Group (AIG) is preparing to buy a five percent stake in China's Minsheng Bank when the bank issues \$1 billion of shares at its Hong Kong IPO before June, according to a *Beijing Youth Daily* report on March 7.

Minsheng Bank's Beijing headquarters and AIG's office in Shanghai refused to confirm such claims, but both responded to *Beijing Today's* inquiries with the exact same words: "We cannot say yes and we cannot say no."

There is already an overseas investor on the board of Minsheng, the International Financial Corporation (IFC), which acquired a 1.5 percent stake in 2001. IFC also holds a 15 percent share in Nanjing City Commercial Bank and controls nearly 20 percent of Xi'an City Commercial Bank.

According to Huang Jinlao, a researcher at the Beijing-based Institute of International Finance, a think tank under the Bank of China, the number of foreign investors entering the domestic banking industry is on the rise.

The Asia Development Bank has acquired a 5.86 stake in Everbright Bank, HSBC holds eight percent of the Bank of Shanghai, the Hong Kong-based Shanghai Commercial Bank has a three percent



Minsheng Bank is set to hold its first overseas IPO in Hong Kong before June.

Photo by Photocom

stake and IFC a two percent in the Bank of Shanghai, and Citigroup purchased a 4.62 percent share in Shanghai Pudong Development Bank last year.

"China has changed the policy of protecting its financial sector and is welcoming overseas investors to participate in the modernization of the over-staffed, inefficient industry," Huang explained to *Beijing Today*.

Liu Mingkang, chairman of the newly established China Banking Regulatory Commission, raised many eyebrows last year when he said at a press conference, "We warmly welcome foreign investors to acquire shares in Chinese banks, from one percent to 100 percent."

Under its World Trade Organization entry promises, China will fully open its banking industry by the end of 2006.

## GM China, SAIC and Shanghai GM Buy Plants

By James Liu

Shanghai Automotive Industry Corporation Group (SAIC), General Motors (GM) China and Shanghai GM signed two deals in Beijing on Monday to purchase an engine plant in Yantai, Shandong Province and a vehicle manufacturing plant in Shenyang, Liaoning Province.

Under the agreement, GM will hold 25 percent stakes, SAIC 25 percent stakes, and their joint venture Shanghai GM 50 percent stakes in both Shandong Daewoo Automotive Engine Co. (SDAE) and Jinbei GM Automotive Co. (Jinbei GM).

The engine venture, formerly owned by South Korean auto maker Daewoo Motor, will be named Shanghai GM

Dongyue Automotive Powertrain Co. and have an annual production capacity of 300,000 engines and transmissions, GM announced in a statement on Monday. A management team headed by representatives from Shanghai GM is overseeing the transfer and daily operational management of Jinbei GM to guarantee a smooth transition, and the partners will work together to develop a new product portfolio for the plant.

The acquisition of SDAE follows the establishment of Shanghai GM Dongyue Motors Company, formed after GM, SAIC and Shanghai GM purchased the Yantai Bodyshop Corporation in December 2002. That joint venture, also located in Yantai, manufactures Buick

Sail compact cars.

The *Beijing Morning Post* reported on Monday that the acquisition of SDAE would render Yantai a major engine and auto manufacturing base for Shanghai GM, a 50-50 joint venture of GM and SAIC.

SAIC President Hu Maoyuan announced after the acquisition, "This represents a big stride forward in the deepening of our cooperation with GM in keeping with the general direction set by China's automotive policy. We strongly support the development of a healthy automotive industry in which major players can consolidate resources and increase their economies of scale so as to avoid repetitive and uncoordinated building of capacity."

### Panda, Alcatel Deny Sale

#### Rumors

By Zhao Hongyi

Cell phone makers Nanjing Panda Electronics and Alcatel have both denied recent reports in domestic media that the Nanjing-based cell phone producer is set to buy Alcatel's handset manufacturing business in China for a price of 250 million euros.

Last year, Alcatel began contacting Chinese handset makers, including Panda and Shenzhen-based TCL, about possible cooperation with the French conglomerate's cell phone manufacturing base in China, Alcatel (Suzhou) Telecommunication Co.

### Standard & Chartered Set to Buy Communications Bank Stake

By Zhao Hongyi

Standard & Chartered Bank's Global Corporate President Kai S. Nargolwala and Private Service President Mike De Noma confirmed reports that their bank was going to acquire shares in the Bank of Communications at a press conference in Hong Kong yesterday.

Detailed information about the deal has not been revealed as the two banks are still in the final stages of negotiations. However, some market analysts have predicted Standard & Chartered will purchase a five to 10 percent stake in the Chinese bank in a transaction that will take place this year. The move will help in the Bank of Communications' push to go public next year.

### Microsoft, HP Promise to Set Up Software Labs

By Zhao Hongyi

Microsoft signed an agreement with China's Ministry of Information Industry yesterday in Beijing to establish a Windows/.NET-based embedded software development center in this country. The center will create software solutions targeted at small and medium-sized domestic software developers.

The same day, the ministry signed another agreement with Hewlett-Packard for the establishment of a Linux-based software lab. Carly Fiorina, HP chairman and CEO, attended the signing ceremony in Beijing as part of a business tour in China. HP later issued an announcement that the lab would initially be used as a product evaluation center.

### Carrefour Expansion to Continue

By Guo Meng

Carrefour, the world's second largest retailer, is determined to continue expanding in China after conducting a thorough, three-year investigation and restructuring of its investments and businesses in this country.

The chain grew very rapidly after opening its first store in the domestic market in 1995. Five years later, the Chinese government demanded the French chain reduce its stakes in all its Chinese supermarkets to under 65 percent, in line with Chinese law.

Carrefour currently operates 42 supermarkets in 25 cities in China.

### Lenovo Announces Layoffs

By Zhao Hongyi

Lenovo, China's largest computer manufacturer, confirmed plans to reduce its workforce by five percent this year. The purpose of the approximately 1,000 job cuts, according to a company press release, is to allow more funds to be concentrated on the group's core businesses of personal computers and other digital products.

In the past three years, Lenovo's annual business turnover has flattened out at around 20 billion yuan, as its new product line have not proven nearly as profitable as expected.

### Austrian Airlines to Open New Routes

By James Liu

The Austrian Airlines Group is extending its network in China by opening direct flights from Shanghai to Vienna three times a week starting April 29. The route will be flown by Lauda Air Boeing B-767 aircraft every Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday.

As of June 1, direct flights from Beijing to Vienna on Airbus A330 planes will be offered every day of the week except Tuesdays.

Austrian Airlines has transported 500,000 passengers on 2,750 flights between Austria and China since first landing in this country in 1995.



# Greenspan Touts Weaker Dollar

Washington, March 2 (AP) - Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan said Tuesday that a weaker US dollar should eventually help narrow the country's swollen trade deficit and renewed a warning that "creeping protectionism" could hurt the flexibility of the global economy.

In remarks to the Economic Club of New York, Greenspan said the value of the US dollar, compared with the currencies of America's major trading partners, has declined about 12 percent from its peak in early 2002.

But Mr. Greenspan admitted a main short-term interest rate controlled by the Fed will eventually have to go up. That

rate, called the federal funds rate, is now at a 45-year low of 1 percent.

Some economists believe the Fed will start to push up rates later this year. But others don't believe higher rates will come until 2005. Most economists expect the Fed to hold rates steady at its next meeting on March 16.

On China, Greenspan cautioned that if the country were to swiftly move to let its currency float freely, it could pose a further risk to the country's fragile banking system and to the global economy.

The Bush administration has been pressing Beijing to stop linking its currency, the renminbi, to the dollar and

instead let the value of the yuan be set in open markets. (Jeannine Aversa)

## Analysts' Take:

*Given America's slow rate of increase in jobs and steady inflation rate of 2-3 percent, the Fed has no reason to raise its rates, at least before the presidential election at the end of this year.*

*In the currency market, the US dollar will fluctuate in a relatively low range against most major currencies.*

*The yen is an exception as the Japanese government insists on a lower yen to help its exports and economic performance. Japan has been active in the market selling*

*yen to lower its exchange rate to around 110-115 to the dollar.*

— **Wang Lei, senior researcher, Institute of International Finance, Bank of China**

*China's foreign trade surplus is decreasing as the country is opening up its market under WTO obligations. We need to spend the money in many ways to support continuing economic growth, such as large government purchases, overseas investment and individual purchases.*

— **Guo Shuqing, vice governor of the People's Bank of China and director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE)**

# Chavez Accuses US

Caracas, Venezuela, March 8 (Reuters) - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez told the United States to "get its hands off Venezuela" as he accused Washington of backing a wave of opposition protests seeking a recall vote against him.

Chavez, who sent troops onto the streets to control a week of protests in which at least eight people were killed, appealed to the international community to condemn what he said was the second US attempt in two years to topple him.

"Mr Bush's government is financing this mad opposition, I have quite a lot of evidence," Chavez said. He repeated charges that Washington had backed an April 2002 coup that briefly ousted him.

President Bush's government has persistently denied repeated accusations by the outspoken Venezuelan president that it is trying to overthrow him. It says Chavez's anti-US rhetoric is an attempt to distract attention from his domestic problems.

Venezuela, the world's No. 5 oil exporter, is one of the top four suppliers of petroleum to the United States. The state oil firm PDVSA says its operations and shipments have not been affected by the anti-government protests.

Opponents say Chavez, a former paratrooper elected in 1998, is ruling like a dictator. But the populist leader still enjoys support among Venezuela's poor.

In a move to prevent further deaths, Venezuela's government on Friday suspended for nine days permits allowing civilians to carry firearms. The suspension will remain in force until March 14.

The opposition is planning another major protest march on Saturday in Caracas.

(Pascal Fletcher)

## Analyst's Take:

*Chavez has taken a left wing road since becoming president in 1999. He says he aims to protect the poor. So he's provoked opposition from the rich because his policies hurt their interests.*

*Undeniably, the US is playing a role. But the country has suffered endless chaos, from the unsuccessful military coup in 2001, months of unrest in 2002 and this latest movement. This means the poor are suffering now as well as the rich. So Chavez is losing their support as well.*

*Though Chavez still has the support of his military forces (except the navy), his position is in danger now. A government facing this kind of crisis cannot survive for long.*

*Venezuela supplies 15 percent of the US total oil imports. OPEC said this week it would raise oil production if the price continued to rise. Last month, the cartel cut its members' oil production quotas, which, combined with the turmoil in Venezuela, drove oil prices up worldwide.*

— **Wu Guoping, professor, Institute of Latin American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences**



# No Way Out, Spammers!

*America Online, EarthLink, Microsoft and Yahoo! jointly filed lawsuits on March 10 against hundreds of defendants alleging violations of the new federal anti-spam law, the CAN-SPAM Act of 2003, which went into effect January 1, 2004.*

*Left-right: Randy Boe, executive vice president and general counsel at AOL, Les Seagraves, chief privacy officer and vice president and assistant general counsel at Earthlink, Nancy Anderson, deputy general counsel at Microsoft and Mike Callahan, senior vice president and general counsel at Yahoo! talk to reporters at the press conference in Washington.*

(Xinhua/AFP Photo)

# Martha Stewart Faces Prison

New York, March 6 (AFP) - Multi-millionaire lifestyle guru Martha Stewart was found guilty of obstructing a federal inquiry into a suspicious stock sale, leaving her facing a possible prison sentence.

Stewart, 62, was convicted on charges of conspiracy, obstruction of justice and two counts of making false statements to federal investigators. Each charge carries a maximum sentence of five years in jail.

In a letter posted on her website immediately after the verdict, Stewart continued to protest her innocence and said she would appeal.

The charges against Stewart stemmed from the trade she made a day before ImClone, the biotechnology company then run by her friend Samuel Waksal, announced news that made the share price plunge.

Prosecutors said Stewart received an improper tip that federal regulators would not approve ImClone's anti-cancer drug, Erbitux.

Her defence argued she had a prior arrangement to sell her ImClone stock should the share price dip below a certain point.

Waksal is currently serving a seven-

year prison term after pleading guilty to securities fraud and other charges.

Stewart became the queen of home decor and amassed a fortune as the head of her own company, Martha Stewart Living Omnimedia, which stamped her style on everything from magazines and recipes to bed linen and bath towels.

## Media Report:

*Martha Stewart was once the dream of America: born to a poor family, but succeeding through great ambition and efforts. She is still a representative of America: you have to pay for an endless appetite and illegal behavior.*

*Martha created an unrealistic image and unreachable standards for the American woman. She worked all day in her office, paid attention to her clothes and style and still found time for the kitchen and the garden. No woman can live and work in the way she demonstrated. It is as though she is being punished for setting up that image, rather than the suspected stock transaction.*

— **China News Services, March 8, 2004**

# Consumers Get Into Fairtrade

London, March 1 (FLO International) - On March 1, the Fairtrade Foundation announced that sales of products carrying the "fairtrade" mark in the UK are running at an annual rate of 100 million pounds sterling. The figures coincided with the official launch of the 10th anniversary of the "fairtrade" mark.

"Fairtrade, backed by a vibrant social movement of people throughout the country, is now bedding into the mainstream, giving thousands of producers in developing countries the chance to build a better future and to compete in the all too cut-throat global markets," said Harriet Lamb, executive director of the Fairtrade Foundation.

Sales of products with the "fairtrade" mark for 2003 totaled an estimated retail

value of over 92m pounds sterling in the UK, 46% up from 2002's 63m. Shoppers can now choose from over 250 products from over 100 companies. More than 300 catering suppliers nationwide offer "fairtrade" products. This compares to only three companies ten years ago.

Supermarkets are the other major force promoting "fairtrade" products.

## Background:

*"Fairtrade" is aimed at better prices, decent working conditions, local sustainability, and fair terms of trade for farmers and workers in the developing world.*

*The "Fairtrade" mark appears on over 100 different products, including coffees, teas,*



Martha Stewart leaves US Federal Courthouse after being found guilty.

(AFP Photo)

# Britain Approves GM Maize

London, March 9 (AFP) - The British government said it would for the first time allow a genetically modified crop to be grown commercially, but under strict conditions.

The thumbs-up came after years of scientific tests and consultations. GM maize grown in Britain - from spring 2005 at the earliest - would be for animal consumption only, but some critics have voiced fears it could be indirectly absorbed by humans through cow's milk.

In Europe, the growing of GM crops on a significant scale takes place only in Spain, which has 32,000 hectares (nearly 80,000 acres) set aside for GM maize.

# EU Looks for New IMF Chief

Brussels, March 9 (AFP) - EU finance ministers held initial discussions on a European candidate to succeed IMF chief Horst Koehler at talks in Brussels this week.

At least two of the ministers are among those tipped as possible successors, the British Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown, Spanish Finance Minister Rodrigo Rato and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development chief Jean Lemierre.

Horst Koehler resigned last week to accept the offer from his party, the conservative Christian Democrats, to be their candidate for German president.

# NYSE Directors Subpoenaed

New York, March 7 (AP) - Up to 65 former members of the New York Stock Exchange board of directors have received subpoenas asking for documents detailing deliberations over the pay of former chairman Dick Grasso.

Former NYSE chairman Richard Grasso has flatly refused to return any part of the \$188 million compensation package that led to his ouster. Grasso argues that he is still owed \$50 million by his former employer.

Both the SEC and New York Attorney General Eliot Spitzer are investigating the matter.

(Michael J. Martinez)

# Kodak Sues Sony

New York, March 10 (AFP) - Eastman Kodak filed a lawsuit against Sony, accusing the Japanese electronics giant of infringing 10 of its patents on digital photo technology.

The complaint covers patents registered between February 1987 and June 2003. They include techniques for compressing and digitally storing images, previewing and reproducing video images.

Sony issued a brief statement rejecting the allegations and vowing to fight the suit.

Kodak also accused another Japanese firm, Sanyo, in 2001 of infringing its intellectual property rights.

# Volkswagen to Cut 5,000 Jobs

Frankfurt, March 9 (AP) - German automaker Volkswagen warned that sluggish auto markets would lead to "miserable" earnings in the current quarter and announced a cost-cutting program to eliminate 5,000 jobs.

About 2,000 to 2,500 of the job losses would come in Germany. Volkswagen has some 335,000 workers worldwide. Last year, Volkswagen's net profit fell to 1.1 billion euros (\$1.4 billion) from 2.6 billion euros in 2002.

Volkswagen's other brands include SEAT, Bugatti, Lamborghini, Skoda, and Bentley.

(David McHugh)



Courtesy by fairtrade.org



# Yongdingmen To Stand Again



Yongding Gate as it stood before being demolished in the 1950s

By Chen Ying

A huge gate that served as an imposing entrance into the capital for centuries is slated to stand again. On Wednesday, a huge project to rebuild the Yongding Gate in the southern part of the city kicked off and plans call for the work to be completed before the National Day holiday in autumn.

The largest of the seven main gates into the *waicheng*, or outer city, of Beijing during the Ming and Qing dynasties,

Yongding Gate stood at the far southern end of the 7.8-kilometer central axis that starts at the Drum and Bell Towers and bisects other imperial structures, such as the Forbidden City.

The original gate was made up of three parts, the *chenglou*, or gate tower, the *jianlou*, or arrow tower, and the *wengcheng*, the city entrance for "barbarians." After guarding the way into Beijing for centuries, Yongding Gate was demolished in the 1950s to make way for new buildings.

Local architects and city planners filed a proposal to rebuild the gate as a major landmark in southern Beijing in 2000, and their plan was given the green light by the municipal government in May 2001.

However, the reconstruction efforts will be limited to the gate tower, which will be rebuilt directly over its original site. The former locations of the *jianlou* and *wengcheng* are now occupied by the South Second Ring Road and the Huchenghe canal.

## Forbidden City Free to Students on Tuesdays

By Yi Yi

Hoping to encourage greater interest among local youth in the history of the Forbidden City, the Palace Museum's management has decided to make entry free to students from all over the country every Tuesday. However, never in their wildest dreams did they think that response to the no-charge tickets would be so eager.

The new pricing policy, which went into effect on March 2, marked the first time for the major tourist destination to cancel entry changes for youth. The free Tuesdays policy extends to primary and middle school students, as well as college students with majors in related subjects such as art, architecture and history. Students from schools nationwide can take advantage of the deal, but must arrive in organized groups, and singles are not eligible.

A quota of 500 students per Tuesday

has been set to ensure the kids' safety and the palace's protection. Since the new policy went into effect, more than 1,000 students have enjoyed free tours, led by guides from the museum's exhibition and publicity department.

And demand is spiraling. As news of the free tickets spreads, schools from all over the country are contacting museum management. "Our phone lines are burning up these days," Qi Peijuan, secretary of the exhibition and publicity department told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday. "We're already booked out for the free tours through the end of the year."

Free students days have become trendy at local museums this year, and 16 facilities under the administration of the Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau now offer such deals. For students on appropriate days, free entry only requires the filling out of simple forms.

## City Rallies to Save Family from Fifth Tragedy



Ren Anfeng and his mother embraced after receiving donations to cover his surgery on Wednesday.

Photo by Wang Wei

By Zhang Ran

Tragedy is no stranger to the Ren family of Shandong Province. After watching four children succumb to congenital leukemia, the family's fifth son is likely to die if he does not receive a bone marrow transplant, a surgery that costs 200,000 yuan that the Rens do not have.

Yet there is real hope now that Ren Anfeng, 10, will live. *Beijing Youth Daily* reports since March 8 about the plight of the boy and his family generated a lot of public sympathy and enough donations to cover the costs of the transplant.

Ren finished his third round of chemotherapy for the treatment of his acute non-lymph leukemia last Saturday at the Beijing University Hospital. The procedure used up nearly all the remaining savings of his parents, who have already lost two boys and two girls shortly after their births to the same disease.

A matching bone marrow donor has already been found and surgeons at Beijing University Hospital are working on setting an appropriate day for the transplant.

The Rens, natives of Heze District in Shandong, are currently living in a shabby rented flat in Shigezhuang in eastern Beijing. The family has already spent around 40,000 on Ren Anfeng's treatment, forcing them to seek out a living off of 50 yuan a month.

The boy's father, Ren Qingmin, told Beijing Youth Daily that before he heard the good news, he was considering selling one of his kidneys to get money for his child's further treatment. "Ren's brothers and sisters died at very early ages, and I am ready to do anything to save the life of my last son," he said.

Previously though passed over by the family curse, Ren Anfeng was diagnosed with leukemia last year. On the suggestion of their local doctor, his parents brought him to Beijing to seek treatment, never expecting the city to come to his rescue.

## Local Artisan Snips Gift for Nane Annan

By Wang Xiaoxiao

Miu Xiufang, 88, sent a gift of 10 delicate paper cuts of monkeys to Nane Annan, wife of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, on Monday for International Women's Day.

Miu, who lives in the Beixinqiao neighborhood in Dongcheng District, went to the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) Beijing Office's on February 20 to ask the staff to deliver her homemade gifts to Mrs. Annan. "The monkeys have already arrived at the UN headquarters and my colleagues will soon pass them on to Mrs. Annan," Zhang Hongman, an assistant at the UNIFEM Beijing Office told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

This is not the first time Miu has made paper cuts for Annan. The two met during an informal discussion about women's rights in October 2002 when Mrs. Annan was visiting Beijing. That day, Miu presented her with two hand-made paper



Miu Xiufang

Photo by Wang Zhenlong

cuts, one depicting a phoenix and the other a dragon.

Despite her age, Miu has not lost her love of paper cutting and has sliced up countless intricate creations to commemorate such major events as the returns of Hong Kong and Macao. Her work *Qingxinchun* (Celebrate the New Year) won second prize in China's Julinbei competition for calligraphy and paper cuts in 2001.

## Wire Walker Sets Sight on World Record



Aisikaier relaxes during the second of his planned 27 days in the air.

Photo provided by West China City Daily

By Guo Yuandan

Uygur daredevil and tight-rope walker Aisikaier set out to break a family member's Guinness World Record when he walked onto a wire suspended over the Donghushan Dam in Deyang City, Sichuan Province last Saturday. He plans to live on the wire 27 days.

Aisikaier, 32, is from a family of high-wire walkers from the Xinjiang Autonomous Region in northwestern China. Last year, he spent an 26 days on a wire in the area of

Zhengzhou, Henan Province, but because the feat was not officially witnessed and therefore did not break the world record of 25 days set by his kinsman Adili in 2002.

He is spending nights in a make-shift shelter attached to the thick wire. To pass the time, since he has no access to friends or television, Aisikaier performs high-wire hula hoop, unicycle and balancing tricks and only uses his cellular phone to answer press questions or talk to fans.

## Paralyzed Footballer Receives Compensation

By Hou Mingxin

A court in Liaoning Province issued a judgment on Monday ordering national team football player Zhang Yuning to give former teammate Qu Luheng 2,630,000 yuan in compensation. Qu was permanently paralyzed four years ago in a car accident that occurred with Zhang at the wheel.

On April 26, 2000, Zhang was driving with Qu and another player from their team after having dinner together when his car suddenly veered off the road and smashed into a tree. The police investigation of the case pointed the finger of blame squarely at Zhang.

Qu's paralysis spelled an instant end to his sporting career and he was dropped by

former employer division A club Liaoning Fushun a couple months after the accident. Zhang transferred from that squad to Shanghai Shenhua in 2002 and quickly emerged as the team's star player.

After failing to receive any compensation from Zhang after the crippling accident, Qu filed a lawsuit against his former teammate last October, demanding 5,740,000 yuan.

The court's final judgment of 2,630,000 yuan represents the highest recorded compensation for a traffic accident in China. However, Qu expressed dissatisfaction with the ruling and said the money would not make up for his suffering. Zhang has 15 days to appeal the decision to a higher court.

## Petrified Wood Scam Brought to Light

By James Liu

A report in *Star Daily* on Monday revealed a factory in Fengtai District that was taking regular stones, polishing them to look like pieces of petrified wood and then selling them under the guise of being valuable, rare fossils.

One man who had supplied basic stones to the factory told the *Star Daily* reporter that he had received 30 yuan per kilogram of rocks. Later, a factory employee confessed, "After it is polished, we can sell a 100 kilogram stone for about 30,000 yuan."

A man who claimed to sell the stones at the Panjiayuan Antique Market said that many foreigners bought the fake fossils, in particular one American man. "He said that these kinds of fossils can only be found in special parks in the US where picking up even a small piece is a crime," the vendor said.

Fliers printed by the factory claimed the pieces of "lucky fortune wood" originated in Burma.

Regulations on Paleobiology Fossils issued by the Ministry of Land and Resources clearly state that the excavation and sale of fossils without permission is illegal. Local authorities, however, did not respond to the *Star Daily* report.

On Tuesday night, a taxi driver called the paper after witnessing fake fossils being transported out of the factory. A reporter arrived at the factory at 9 pm and also saw factory workers moving rocks. The police hit the scene shortly after and have launched an investigation of the case.

## Colorful Frescos Found in Ancient Temple

By Xiao Yingying

A series of colorful frescos hidden for centuries were discovered in a temple in Chaoguan village, Gu-beikou township in Miyun county last week. According to Wang Yuwei, deputy director of the Beijing Bureau of Cultural Relics, the frescos show clear evidence of having been created in the Ming Dynasty (1368 to 1644). Yet who painted them and why remain mysteries.

The frescos are housed in several rooms in a large Ming-era temple. Protected from the elements by the temple's thick walls, the paintings are remarkably intact and still brightly colored.

However, they are in peril right now, as the structure of the temple has weakened and is on the verge of collapse. According to a report in *Beijing Evening News* on Monday, the government of Miyun County has already begun restoring the site. The enclosing walls have been repaired and the next step is to strengthen the main area of the temple, which should begin this year.

## Shangri-La Hotels Collecting Change for Good Cause

By Ren Yu

Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts launched the "Little Envelope" charity project, intended to collect donations for the "Healthy Mother Express" program, this Monday at its four hotels in Beijing.

The "Healthy Mother Express" program was organized by the China Women's Federation and the General Office of the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council of China and was implemented by the China Women's Development Foundation.

"Healthy Mother Express" refers to 200 clinic-style staffed and equipped medical vans that will travel to China's impoverished western areas to promote health education and provide medical services to needy women. The program specifically targets 12 provinces, with around 90 percent of current operations concentrated on Shanxi and Guizhou provinces. Many of these areas are plagued by high rates of gynecological diseases and maternal mortality.

The "little envelopes" for contributions, each bearing written introductions to the program, will be put in every room at the four local Shangri-La hotels. Guests that want to do their bit can simply slide loose change or larger contributions into the envelopes and then put them into the central collection box at the hotels' reception desks.



# NPC, CPPCC Sessions Conclude

The ten-day second session of the 10th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) finishes today and the Second Plenum of the 10th National People's Congress (NPC) will close on Sunday, having opened on March 5. We round up the hot topics and proposals that representatives discussed during the sessions.

## A Stable Renminbi?

By Zhao Hongyi

Never has discussion of the renminbi been given such prominence at the two sessions. Pressure to revalue China's currency has been a growing subject of debate over the past six months. Market speculators have been accumulating renminbi in anticipation of its revaluation at a higher level. But sources from the two meetings, particularly from members and deputies closely involved with the issue, put a dampener on such speculation.

Guo Shuqing, director-general of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) and a member of the CPPCC, said that the pressure for revaluation is expected to ease this year as economies of the US and other developed countries are showing signs of recovery.

"Therefore, to bet on appreciation is likely to be a mistake," Guo warned.

Ma Kai, head of China's State Development and Reform Commission, said China would keep its currency at a rational and balanced level.

"We will constantly improve the mechanism for determining the exchange rate and keep the currency stable," Ma told the National People's Congress.

Speaking before 3,000 delegates to the annual NPC session, Premier Wen Jiabao pledged to keep the Chinese yuan stable.

"We will work to balance international payments and keep the exchange rate basically stable at a proper and balanced level," Wen said in his report.

## Economy Growing, But with Problems

By Zhao Hongyi

Economic development has always been a hot topic at the two meetings. Deputies of the NPC and members of the CPPCC discussed issues such as the speed of growth of the national economy in the new year and how to solve the imbalance between the developed east and less developed west.

Xiao Zhuoji, a professor from Beijing University who is also a member of the CPPCC, said he was optimistic about the economy.

"I cannot deny that there is some overheating and bubbles in some sectors and industries," Xiao stated. "But we can solve them case by case."

Xiao came out with a list of proposals, including reducing taxation to support agriculture, hi-tech industry and



Applause for Premier Wen Jiabao's first governmental work report at the opening ceremony of the Second Session of the 10th National People's Congress  
Photo by Cheng Tieliang

infrastructure construction. He also proposed reducing the public funds invested in the economy in favor of private investment, stimulating the domestic stock markets by introducing overseas capital and opening the market further to private capital, in some areas in particular such as infrastructure and public services.

Lin Yifu, a member of the CPPCC warned that deflation might return to China in the next two or three years because of overcapacity unless the country succeeds in cooling down the excessive investment in some economic sectors.

Zhang Qicheng, an NPC deputy for Hebei Province, echoed Lin's warning, saying duplicated investment was common in the sectors of steel, glass, cement, ceramics, automobile and parts. It's a problem which he believes "wastes our resources greatly."

Zhang urged governments to take tougher action to tackle the issue, including stringent control of bank loans, and threat of penalties to government officials that approve such projects.

Wang Shaojie, vice-chairman of the China Democratic National Construction Association and a member of the CPPCC, urged the government to increase subsidies to agriculture and give an attentive ear to farmers. "The need to raise farmers' incomes is important and urgent," said Li Ranyou, deputy director of agricultural administration of central Henan Province.

Wang Yunkun, a member of the NPC from Jilin Province, strongly urged the old industrial bases in Northeast China to make greater efforts in switching from the planned economy to a market-oriented system. The three provinces of Heilongjiang, Jilin and Liaoning used to be the heavy industrial base of China but now lag far behind.

Wang Guofa, a CPPCC member, said the two top tasks for the central government and local governments were to further reform state owned enterprises and develop market economies in areas where conditions permit.

Mechanization of agriculture and

the application of high-technology in agriculture are the only two ways to further develop China's agriculture industry, said Liu Mingzu, director of the NPC Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee.

Fu Hanxun, NPC deputy from Guangzhou, warned that China should avoid the economic collapse seen in Latin America. Due to heavy dependence on foreign investment and technologies, Latin America has been experiencing economic depression since foreign investors withdrew their capital and facilities and turned to Asia in the 1990s in the search for lower labor prices.

"We have our potential competitors in terms of attracting investment and technologies from the west," Fu said, referring to less developed Asian countries and some African countries.

To avoid this, Fu said China needed to work on developing the economy in its own way. "The private sector is the only area that has the dynamism, enthusiasm and innovative capability for this," he said.

## Constitutional Amendments Discussed

By Hou Mingxin

A draft amendment to China's Constitution was submitted to the 10th National People's Congress and is waiting for approval on Sunday.

The draft amendment has a total of 13 major points including protection of private property and human rights, improvement of the land requisition system and improvement of the social security system. The proposed draft created strong interest among NPC members

"Constitutional protection of legally accumulated wealth will spur investment and consumption, and further promote development of the national economy," said NPC deputy Wu Zixiang, an entrepreneur from Guangdong.

"It's a consistent principle adopted by the party and the state to respect and protect human rights. To write this principle into the constitution will further provide a legal guarantee for this,"

said Wang Zhaoguo, vice chairman of the NPC Standing Committee.

"Judging from China's current situation, the top concern in human rights protection should be guaranteeing the people's rights to subsistence. This is particularly true in less developed regions like my hometown," said Yao Sidan, an NPC deputy from Garze Tibet, an Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province.

"Only when constantly improving the people's livelihood can other rights of the people be effectively taken care of," said Yao. "Of course, this doesn't mean that other aspects of human rights can be neglected."

"A country cannot solely pursue economic development, just as a cook cannot only care about the size of a cake. How to cut up the cake is also a question," said Zheng Gongcheng, a member of the 10th NPC Standing Committee. "The state should establish and improve a comprehensive social security system in line with the economic development," he said in his draft.

## Agricultural Tax Cut

By Hou Mingxin

Agriculture was inevitably a major issue at the meetings, particularly agricultural tax, food security and farmers' income.

In his government work report, Premier Wen promised to cut agricultural tax by one percentage point every year from now on, so that it will end completely within five years.

Zhang Peiyang, a farmer NPC deputy from the eastern province of Anhui, said many farmers in remote villages are too poor to pay their medical bills and children had to stay at home doing farm work after finishing primary school.

Most grain growers in China have enough to eat but little money to spend on anything else, Zhang said.

Eminent agronomist Professor Yuan Longping urged the government to guarantee China's food security by pursuing self-reliance in domestic production. "Food security bears on national security," he said.

sion of the beauty business has promoted the development of the industry in producing enterprises, shops, logistics, media and advertisements.

"There are more and more private-owned drug stores; however, there are fewer and fewer township or county hospitals. So the prices of drugs are increasing dramatically and people cannot afford them. Additionally, the staff in the private-owned drug stores do not have sufficient knowledge so they often give the wrong prescriptions and harm people. In order to change the current situation, we should lift the threshold for operating a drug store and implement serious training for the employees as well as controlling the price of the drugs."

— Zhao Hui, NPC member of Chi Feng, Inner Mongolia.

(By Wang Fang)

## Making an Honest Living

Growing network of police informers seek protection

By Su Wei

Hu Wei (pseudonym) was a pretty typical informant, according to *Nanguo Zaobao*, a newspaper in Nanning, Guangxi. For eight years, he provided information to the public security, industrial and commercial, and tobacco supervision departments in Guangxi Province. But now he's returned to his hometown in a small village in Guangxi.

The life of an informant is too dangerous, and the rewards are uncertain. "I got married last year and now my wife is pregnant," Hu told *Nanguo Zaobao*. "We want to lead a quiet and safe life."

According to the newspaper there are around 100 informants in Nanning, most of whom are vagrants. "We have to be extremely careful. If recognized as an informant, we could be beaten and our lives could be at risk," Hu said.

"People usually become informants because they are attracted by the rewards offered by government departments. They can make a living from these rewards," said the newspaper. "It's not unusual for an informant to earn around 10,000 yuan per month." Rewards for informants in Nanning are calculated on the total value of confiscated goods in cash. They can get 20 percent of the sum from confiscated goods worth more than 100,000 yuan and 15 percent for a stash worth less than 100,000 yuan. "Once the informants 'retire' they usually buy houses and cars or start their own business through the money they earn," said the newspaper.

However Hu reveals that informants cannot always get the rewards promised by government departments. "For the past two years I have been owed more than 20,000 yuan," he said. "The labor supervision departments can do nothing for me since I signed no labor contracts with the government departments."

Do these unofficial informants deserve legal protection? Should their earnings be guaranteed? Opinions follow:

**Zhao Jianji, civil servant of a justice department**

There's nothing wrong with government departments using some informants but I do not think the practice should be widely adopted. Improper use of the informants may result in infringement of the rights of the people being investigated, especially the right to privacy. Since there are no laws or regulations specifying the rights and obligations of the informants, it would be meaningless to consider protection of their rights.

**Xu Min, director of Zhejiang XM Lawyers' Office**

There are two kinds of informants: one is an ordinary person who aims to get rewards announced by government departments through the information they provide and the other is trained and employed by government departments. Only the latter can and should have their rights protected.

**Meng Guangang, head of a police station in Shenyang, Liaoning Province, founder of one of the first investigation firms in China, Liaoning Kedun Investigation Office**

When I was a policeman more than 10 years ago, we had to have informants, some of whom were criminals. I did have several such informants who provided useful and accurate information. I had to tell the police to set them free when they were arrested and put into prison, saying that these criminals were my informants. In fact these informants were all registered by the police and therefore they were protected by the police.

Nowadays, there's another kind of informant: ordinary people attracted by government policies to reward them. Though these informants can be treated as a new occupation for people to make a living, their development should not be promoted.

**Lü Hongjun (pseudonym), an informant in Guangdong**

I always dreamed of being a policeman but my school marks were too low. When I became an informant, I gained the sense of being a policeman, as well as mastering some professional skills and becoming more independent.

Working as an informant is like walking on the tip of a knife. But it is so challenging. I am never afraid, for I believe that as long as I behave like a good person I will have nothing to fear.

**Yu Wei, employee of a trading company**

Informants are just one of the new jobs that appear along with social development. There's obviously a demand for them. There is also no doubt that informants have a legal basis for their existence.

For me, I would never be a regular informant as it is too risky. But I might report to government departments once or twice if the reward was so large that I could overlook the danger.

**Wang Ying (pseudonym), a policewoman in Beijing**

Using informants is extremely effective for us to detect crimes. I think the current social system needs the informants.

There have long been a variety of protection measures for informants. Otherwise there wouldn't be any of them. And nobody is forced to be an informant. They choose it themselves.

**Huang Qiuhui, (pseudonym) father of an informant**

Cracking down on fake goods can benefit the country and we ordinary people hate fake products. But I don't like my son being an informant. Being an informant is not living by honest work and is a shameful job.

## SOUND BITES

"In 2020, there will be 30 to 40 million Chinese men who will not be able to find a woman to marry."

— Li Weixiong, vice-director of CPPCC Committee of Population, Resources and Environment and researcher of the Institution of National Population and Family Planning Commission of China, pointing out the severity of the gender unbalance in China.

"State-owned capital should be withdrawn from professional competition. Chinese table tennis will always be at the top and Chinese football will survive."

— Chang Jinyue, NPC member and a member of China Professional Competition, proposing that the government should stipulate a timetable for the withdrawal of state-owned capital from the football market in

order to promote the reform of professional competition.

"Those who produce and sell counterfeit diplomas as well as those who have and use them both benefit from it. At present, it is obviously not fair that we only punish those who produce and sell the counterfeit diplomas and not care about those who use them."

— Shen Lianqing, the Principal of Zhejiang University of Science and Technology proposes making the use of counterfeit diplomas or certificates a crime.

"The rate of individual income tax should be lowered and the highest rate of individual income tax should be reduced to 30%. The deduction of insurance, education, house mortgage and pension should be in-

creased appropriately in favor of the special situations of taxpayers. Tax breaks for foreign employees should be increased."

— Zhang Hongli, CPPCC member and president of the Asian Branch of Deutsche Bank proposed reducing the rate of individual income tax so as to attract talent from abroad.

"The area of beauty products and services has become the fourth biggest consumption focus after houses, automobiles and travel for residents of China's cities. The sector is in bad need of regulation to guarantee its development."

— Zhang Xiaomei, CPPCC member and head of China Beauty and Fashion newspaper. Currently the beauty business has more than 12 million employees with annual production worth over 184.8 billion yuan. The expan-



By Su Wei

Huang Yong (pseudonym), an official of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, was taken aback when he heard the price of the receptacle for a colleague's ashes at a major Beijing funeral crematorium. Okay, it was imported from Spain, but surely 3,800 yuan was a little stiff? "To me, it is no more than a box," he told *Beijing Today*. "But the crematorium sold it for 2,000 yuan when they found we were from the ministry. I cannot imagine how they can charge this price to ordinary people."

According to a report published in *Qingnian Shixun*, a major Chinese newspaper, in January this year, the funeral business is the third most profitable industry in China, following real estate and primary and middle school education. The report says the total income of the Chinese funeral industry has leapt from around five billion yuan in 2000 to about 20 billion yuan a year.

### Our most modestly priced receptacle

At Babaoshan Crematorium, prices for containers for ashes range from 198 yuan all the way up to 15,800. Transporting a dead body costs 5 yuan per kilometer within Beijing Municipality and 10 yuan per kilometer outside. The cremation itself costs between 380 and 700 yuan.

Ning, unwilling to disclose his full name, told *Beijing Today* at Babaoshan Crematorium that he would happily spend 30,000 or 40,000 yuan on an ash casket for his dead wife. "I want my wife to leave with dignity. We have no children," he said. "The higher the price the better the quality."

Yang, a senior accountant for a joint venture in Dongcheng District, Beijing, says she definitely will not listen to her parents who asked to have their ashes thrown into the sea after they die. "If I did not store their ashes, people would say I was not giving due respect to my parents and that I was a mean

**In 2000, one private funeral enterprise made a profit of more than 880,000 yuan, purely through the mark-up on the 3,077 ash caskets they sold that year.'**

person," she said.

An official of the Ministry of Civil Affairs, requesting to be unnamed, told *Beijing Today* that people in his hometown in Heilongjiang Province usually spend at least 40,000 yuan on funeral services.

According to the media in Guangdong Province, people with an above-average income will often spend around 100,000 yuan on funeral services.

# The Profits of Death



A receptacle priced at 5,400 yuan at a funeral crematorium

### Huge profits?

The local media in Wuhan, Hubei Province, reported that in 2000, one local private funeral enterprise made a profit of more than 880,000 yuan, purely through the mark-up on the 3,077 ash caskets they sold that year.

A report in *Beijing Youth Daily* last month quoted a man who has worked in the funeral industry in Guangxi province

for around 10 years. "It's easy to make money from the dead," he said. "Our profits are usually 300 percent more than the costs. Sometimes they're 1,000 percent more."

He mentioned shrouds for wrapping dead bodies, which are sold for at least 800 yuan for ones made of ordinary materials and 2,000 yuan for those made of silk. "In fact the cost of these shrouds is no higher than 60 yuan," he admitted.

*Beijing Today* interviewed a man named Zheng who runs a store selling wreaths and shrouds for funeral services in Changping District, Beijing. Most of the wreaths sold at his store are ones he made himself, at a cost of several dozen yuan. He admits he could sell a wreath for up to 200 yuan. "There is not much difference in the materials used for shrouds that sell for between 400 and 3,000 yuan; the costs are usually around 100 yuan," he added.

The *Beijing Youth Daily* report also mentioned that in Guangxi, a tomb with an auspicious location usually costs at least 20,000 yuan per square meter per year - in China, people often lease tombs for a certain period of time. Tombs in less ideal locations cost

5,000 yuan per square meter per year. An investigation conducted by Xinhua last October found that in Guiyang, Guizhou Province, tombs in the best locations can sell for more than 100,000 yuan per square meter.

Huang Qiaoquan, director of the Policy Research Office of Beijing Funeral Supervision Department, says the funeral business is not quite the money spinner many people think it is. Most funeral crematoriums have heavy financial burdens, he says. "The central government has no money to allocate to the funeral crematoriums. And the crematoriums have to provide money to the Ministry of Civil Affairs to help pay for social welfare. We are also required to reduce the cost of funeral services for people living in poverty, and those who are handicapped or have no children," he said.

An official of the Ministry of Civil Affairs denied that there were huge profits being made in the funeral industry. He told *Beijing Today* the price for cremation is usually set by local governments at between 80 yuan in counties and several hundred yuan in large cities. "Such prices can hardly make up the cost of running the crematorium," he said.

### Demand

Huang points out it is the people that decide what kind of funeral service they want and how much they want to pay. "Can we say 'No' to people when they ask for high priced caskets and want to have wreaths during the cremation?" he asked.

Xiao Chenglong (pseudonym), an official at the Ministry of Civil Affairs, considers it is the special characteristics of this market that results in "huge profits in some areas of the industry."

He says that the Chinese funeral industry embodies family ideas in China. "In order to show off their family's authority and high social status, Chinese people are used to competing with others in elaborate funeral services, which inevitably spurs the profits in the industry," Xiao explained.

Jiang Xiaogang, vice director of Beijing Funeral Supervision Department, says another reason is that there are no laws on the funeral industry in China. "What we have are merely regulations that are less binding."

He says the current regulations for the funeral industry do not include any specific terms relating to punishment for overcharging. "The only punishments that can be handed out are economic or administrative, such as giving fines or asking people to leave their positions," he said.

Xiao says the reason some areas of the industry make such huge profits is quite obvious. "People are driven by profit," he said. "The Ministry of Civil Affairs says that the funeral crematoriums should hand in some of their profits but the amount is not specified," he added.

Xiao considers it is acceptable that prices in the funeral industry are "comparatively high. The funeral crematoriums are enterprises like any other. Why shouldn't they make a profit?" he said.

Information Times has pointed out that as long as the funeral industry is mainly controlled by the central government, prices will remain high. "Monopolies result in huge profits," the newspaper said.

According to the national Statistics Bureau, roughly 8.2 million people die in China each year. "If the cost of each funeral service is an average of 1,000 yuan, that's a market worth over 8 billion yuan a year," the newspaper said.

Xiao, however, cautions against further opening of the market. Private companies in the industry are already making massive profits, he says. "Since the credit system is less developed in China, how can we make sure that funeral enterprises don't take advantage of consumers?" he asked.



Receptacles at a funeral crematorium

Photos by Tao Weicheng

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By Grace Wei

Posters offering a 200,000 yuan reward for homicide suspect Ma Jiajue, an undergraduate of Yunnan University, have spread throughout the country in recent days. Four students were found dead on February 23 in one of the school's dormitories.

Ma Jiajue, aged 23, was born in Binyang County, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. He was studying biochemistry at Yunnan University. Ma is 1.71 meters tall, with a square face, high cheekbones, sunken eyes and a prominent lower lip. The posters also gave out Ma's ID card number and five other possible ID numbers he might use, two of them belonging to the victims.

The bodies were found in dormitory lockers at Yunnan University on February 23. Police declared that Ma Jiajue was the chief suspect after he disappeared. The National Ministry of Public Security is offering a 200,000 yuan reward for information leading to his arrest.

#### They seek him here

In the last two weeks, dozens of people bearing a passing resemblance to Ma have been arrested and then hastily released by police in several different provinces. Rumors on the Internet have suggested sightings in numerous different places, from his hometown in southwest Guangxi Province all the way to Tibet Autonomous Region.

Gansu Police received reports on March 4 that a man of similar figure and features to Ma had been seen in the northwest province. So the whole of Gansu was soon on alert. Several men were arrested that day but all were soon released.

Sources from *Jianghuai Morning Post* reported that a young man whose fingerprints matched those of Ma had been arrested in Huangshan. Still it was not Ma, and the youth was released.

Possible sightings have also been reported in Taiyuan, capital of Shanxi, and Ningbo in Zhejiang Province.

# Nationwide Manhunt After Campus Murder



Ma Jiajue

For now, nobody knows where Ma is, or why he might have killed the four students.

#### What's that smell?

The authorities at the university were alerted by Miao, who returned to his dormitory after the Spring Festival break on February 22. He observed the room was unusually clean but a bit

smelly and none of his roommates were back. Without giving it any more thought, he slept there that night. But the next day the odor became intense and appeared to be coming from the lockers. Security guards of the Accommodation Center arrived at the dormitory after Miao reported it. They unlocked the cabinet and a corpse wrapped in papers and adhesive tape fell out onto the floor.

Three more bodies were then found in other lockers. They were recognized as four senior students of the biology faculty, two of them Miao's roommates in room 317, Tang Xueli and Shao Ruijie. Yang Kaihong was from room 316 and Gong Bo was from another dormitory building. A hammer was found in room 316. A local medical expert reported that the four had been killed with the hammer, between February 16 and 18. Police said the case appeared to be a carefully plotted murder.

#### Ma Jiajue suspected

After fingerprint matching, suspicion concentrated on Ma Jiajue, the one missing student from room 317. He was the only inhabitant of the room who had stayed at school throughout the Spring Festival, working at a local su-

permarket. A student witness said that the four victims returned to school on February 14 to write their theses and look for jobs. One of them, Gong Bo, was seen being invited by Ma to play cards on the night of February 15. He never returned to his dormitory after that and then Ma also disappeared. A local bank revealed that Ma had withdrawn 450 yuan from his account on the same afternoon.

The police checked Ma's computer and found violent films and survival skill teaching programs, as well as timetables of major railway stations around the country. Police also found that Ma had checked laws and regulations relating to creating and using ID at the National Public Security Office official website.

On February 24 the provincial police offered a 150,000 yuan reward for information, and on March 1 the National Ministry of Public Security publicized a nationwide notice for Ma and increased the reward to 200,000 yuan.

#### A paradox

A reporter from Guangzhou-based *Oriental Morning Post* went to Ma's hometown, Ma'er village, nearby Binyang County. "As soon as I know where he is, I will report it to the police," Ma's father, Ma Jianfu said. "This is like a nightmare and hard to believe. Jiajue had always been the pride of our family. He was the first one from our neighborhood to go to a first-class university."

Ma's family make their living by running a local laundry. A black and white television is the only luxury they own. "Jiajue was my youngest son, also the most obedient and filial of my four children," Ma's father said, weeping. "He didn't talk much. Our family ran up big debts to afford his tuition. Last summer holiday, when he returned home and saw we were staying up ironing clothes, he was upset. The next day he went out and found a part-time job."

Wei, a local villager also has fond memories of Ma. "One afternoon it suddenly started raining and I was carrying a bundle of wood from the mountains. Jiajue met me and helped me carry it home. He used to be kind to all the villagers," she said.

Mr. Huang, morality instructor in Ma's junior high school, said Ma never quarreled with any other students and always accepted criticism.

However, Mr. Zhang, a teacher at Ma's senior high school, said Ma often played truant. "He never changed, even after moral education. But considering his poor family and his good grades, we didn't expel him," he said.

#### Unknown motive

Seeing as Ma left with only a few hundred yuan and the victims' money had not been taken, motivation for the killing is still not known.

Reporters from *Huashang Daily* interviewed a few of Ma's fellow students. Surprisingly, they said Ma and the four victims had been good friends. "They used to play basketball together or steal out of class," said Yan, one of the students interviewed. "They were energetic sports lovers with few bad habits. One victim, Yang, had continued his education thanks to donations since high school so he was kind and helpful to everyone. Shao was from Guangxi Province, like Ma. As far as I know, they all got on well up to the winter holiday."

However, another reporter from Kunming's *Chuncheng Evening Post*, interviewed a student who said Ma had slowly become alienated from his roommates. One victim loved pop music while Ma hated it. There had been other small arguments but no obvious feud since the victims were good natured and Ma showed no violence in his behavior.

Ye Bin, a psychological expert from East China Normal University, said an accumulated feeling of depression might have triggered the murders. *Huashang Daily* asked Ma's classmates about his physical and psychological condition. Sources said Ma was very muscular and kept the habit of having cold water baths. They said he had a tough character and would often go for weeks eating just two or three *mentou* a day.

One girl in Ma's class revealed that Ma had admired one classmate but had not succeeded in going out with her. Most female classmates thought Ma seemed sullen.

#### How could it happen?

Reporters from *Huashang Daily* received different feedback from the Yunnan University students as to the causes of the murder. One student said the school should be responsible for the murder owing to poor administration of the accommodation center. "If the university cares about students, Ma shouldn't have been able to leave without anyone noticing for several days."

The four victims' relatives are currently staying in different hotels and police are not allowing anyone to interview them. Compensation has not yet been decided, but one victim's uncle, Tang Xueli, said, "The child is dead, what does money matter?"

Meanwhile, *Chuncheng Evening Post* reported that universities in Yunnan have taken a series of measures to protect their students. Visitor to campuses will be more strictly checked and students will not be allowed to leave without permission.

By Wang Fang / Li Zhenbin / Zhang Wanfeng / Lü Naicheng

Crowds of people gathered in front of the office building of Yuncheng Police Bureau, Shanxi, on the afternoon of March 4, 2004. Nine children dressed in new clothes but with terrified expressions were taken away by their crying parents. This was the scene after a press conference about a series of criminal cases involving kidnapping and selling of children in Yuncheng. For nearly two years, the local police had been scouring eight provinces and 56 counties for leads in the case. Early this month, the kidnapped children were finally rescued by the police and sent back to their parents.

#### Special Case Group

Yuncheng is in the south of Shanxi Province. The Yellow River follows a curve here and forms the Yellow River "Golden Triangle". The enormous agricultural resources give Yuncheng the name of "Barn of Shanxi".

However, a shocking case disturbed the peace on June 15, 2002. A group of villagers from three counties, Yanhu, Wenxi, Xiaxian, appealed to Yuncheng Women's Federation, saying their six pre-school children had disappeared one after the other. They could not find them and they asked the Women's Federation to help. The Federation reported it to the local police bureau. Cui Changsheng, Director of Yuncheng Police Bureau, thought a gang of kidnapers was probably responsible. The vice squad of Yuncheng Police Bureau began to investigate.

The police found that a boy had gone missing in Wenxi in April 2002. On May 2002, a girl went missing in Wenxi, then a girl and a boy went missing in Xiaxian, and another girl went missing in Yanhu. On June 2002, another boy and a male baby went missing. By now, nine local children had disappeared. On June 17, 2002, Yuncheng Police Bureau decided this series of cases was the most important case in the region and organized the police in three counties to establish the Special Case Group.

#### Building the case

Initially the investigation failed to turn up any significant leads and the case went cold. Just then, another case occurred. On July 20, 2002, two men on a red motorbike snatched a 2-year-old boy who was with his 15-year-old uncle at the time in Shenguoacun, Yanhu.

The Special Case Group assembled 20 policemen to investigate the case and arrange interceptions on local roads. Two days later on July 22, a young man named Shen Qinglin was found with the kidnapped boy on the Yellow River Iron Chain Bridge connecting Pinglu, Shanxi to Sanmenxia, Henan.

Unfortunately, the investigation then found this was an individual case and not connected to the other ones.

#### No sign of kidnapers

The Special Case Group decided to focus on Xiaxian as there had

## Kidnappers Caught



Photos provided by Li Zhenbin / Zhang Wanfeng / Lü Naicheng



Police with the nine children



The kidnappers

been other cases of kidnapping there since 1995. The police questioned all the criminals suspected of involvement in those cases.

By 2003, investigations by the Special Case Group led them to announce they were seeking a bald man in his fifties.

The police sent out arrest orders in 13 counties in Yuncheng. The DNA samples of the missing children's parents were also put into the database of the Public Security Department and the data was shared with neighboring provinces.

But even though the police uncovered other baby-kidnapping criminal groups, they still couldn't find the children from Yuncheng.

#### Parents search for their children

At the same time, the parents of the victims established their own association to find the children. The families were ordinary rural families and they had to borrow money from relatives and friends and even sell their properties to fund the search. They sent out notices about the missing children and contacted the local media.

One man, named Li, had a particularly heavy burden. His wife and his son are disabled and his daughter-in-law is quite weak. Only he and his

kidnapped grandson, Li Hupeng are healthy. In order to save money, Li asked the whole family to eat just two meals a day. They bought no new clothes for two years. Li sold all his grain and livestock and borrowed money from relatives and neighbors. Whenever he got some money, he would go out to look for his grandson. When he had no money, he would just sit in the yard, writing in the earth, "Li Hupeng, my grandson, where are you?"

#### Kidnappers caught at last

On the morning of April 24, 2003, a six-year-old girl in Pinglu, Yuncheng went missing. On October 9, 2003, a four-year-old girl in Xiaxian was also taken. Then on December 28, 2003, another four-year-old boy from Pinglu, Yuncheng went missing.

The police believed that the criminals were using Pinglu as their exit to Sanmenxia, Henan and selling the children in other provinces. So they watched the Yellow River Bridge from Pinglu to Sanmenxia and asked police in Sanmenxia to help with the investigation.

On February 26, 2004, two men were arrested on the Yellow River Bridge by Sanmenxia Police since their motorbikes were stolen ones. Li Xiyan was bald and 51 years old and

lived in Henan. The other man called Gao Shuangcheng, 36 years old, was from Yuncheng. They admitted that besides stealing vehicles and motorbikes, they once stole a 5-year-old boy and sold him in Anyang, Henan. The Sanmenxia police alerted the Special Case Group.

After further questioning, the two suspects confessed they kidnapped nine children from April 2002 to December 2003. All the kidnapped children were sold in Henan. The boys were sold for 7000-9000 yuan and girls were sold for 3000-4000 yuan.

#### Children found

On the afternoon of March 2, 2004, the whole case was clear and the addresses of the kidnapped children were recorded. The vice group leader, Sun Yanxue, led 80 policemen to Anyang, Henan to get the children.

On March 3, the first rescued girl, Shen Huishan was brought to Neihuang County Police Bureau. Three more girls were rescued that morning. The police rescue teams then headed out to five local villages.

At 4 pm, police found Li Hupeng studying in school. The teacher was initially unwilling to let them take him away. "If you take him, what will I say to his parents?" he asked. Finally, with the help of the headmaster, Li was taken away.

The police also found Guo Enci who was on his way back home from school that afternoon. When the police found, Yao Liang, they had a lot of difficulty persuading his adoptive parents to let him return home. A fourth boy, Wu Bingtao was also found that night and the next day, the last boy, Liu Zhuo, was rescued.



By Philomena Cho

Wang Jinghua's passion for accumulating antiques comes not from a need to hoard but a desire to preserve and share the exquisite worlds contained within the intricately made crafts handed down across centuries of Chinese culture.

Wang specializes in antiques made by ordinary people. "I've always been more interested in the art of the people because that's where the real creativity was. The palace arts were made to order, produced to specific instructions with very strict restrictions so there really wasn't any room for individual expression or experimentation. The art of the people was created for their own use so they were free to use whatever they felt was best."

#### So many stories

With Wang as one's guide, the world of rich meaning contained within a single antique suddenly becomes accessible. "Each piece tells a complex story," explains Wang. "Take this *hebao* (a kind of embroidered purse) from the Qing Dynasty," he says. "It tells the popular story of Niu Lang Zhi Nu, showing the star-crossed lovers about to meet at their once-a-year reunion. In something simple like a pair of ear coverings or a small piece of embroidery, you can find all the myths and legends of ancient China. These pieces not only helped pass on stories from generation to generation, but they also show us today what ordinary people thought about then, what was happening in those times, how people lived then."

Wang's shop on the second floor of Beijing Curio City is indeed another world from the shiny new face of today's Beijing. From one of his many boxes, he picks up a silver necklace with a pendant that resembles a large lock. "Yes, this is actually called a lock, to 'lock down' a life," Wang says. "If you look closely, you can see different motifs of flowers, plants and figures which corresponded to symbols for prosperity, peace, long life. So each piece held the hopes and dreams of the people who made and used them," he adds.

"Nowadays everything is machine made en masse," Wang says, "so we tend to think of objects as throwaways. But in those days; a lot of time, energy and care went into the making of each article so it gave each piece a deeply personal and emotional meaning. A wife may have taken months to embroider a bag for her husband or a pair of shoes for the baby."

#### In the detail

The 53-year old Wang seems to see the world in terms of collectibles. He began to amass his first collection, that of stamps, from the age of six. Wang recalls with a smile, "Every cent that I could find, I spent on stamps. They just fascinated me. There were heroes, cultural artifacts, life, art, commemorative events. It seemed to me that the whole world could be found in a tiny stamp." Wang moved from Beijing to a rural community in Shanxi when he was 14, a place he would call home for the next 23 years. "I feel fortunate to have ended up in a place with such a rich traditional culture," Wang says, "but of course my stamp collecting days were over."

Soon, however, Wang saw that there could be a world of culture and detail in other small items. "I remember one day in winter, I saw a traditional marriage ceremony. The bride wore the most beautiful pair of embroidered ear coverings that I had ever seen, they must have been from the turn of the 1900s. They seemed to me to tell a story, and to contain so much culture in just a simple item that others might overlook, so

"Nowadays everything is machine made en masse," Wang says, "so we tend to think of objects as throwaways. But in those days; a lot of time, energy and care went into the making of each

article so it gave each piece a deeply personal and emotional meaning. A wife may have taken months to embroider a bag for her husband or a pair of shoes for the baby."

# Wang's World



Wang in his shop, Yasu Yishu Yuan.

Photos by Philomena Cho

#### Keeping a record

Wang doesn't just collect these worlds in miniature but writes about them as well. "These antiques are a repository of Chinese culture; 1,000 years of stories are all here. So, I record everything I can find out about each piece to retain as much of that knowledge as I can. Too often, a piece becomes separated from its story and then the richness of that heritage is lost to us," he adds.

Starting out as a way to preserve the rich history of each piece, Wang started to see writing as a bridge for others to enter the fascinating world of antiques. "If we don't start recording traditional cultural items now, they're going to disappear and we won't have any to appreciate anymore," he says. "There are so many people like me, who love these and want to collect or study them, but until recently, there haven't been any channels for them to do so. The books provide one way for anyone wishing to study or learn more."

Wang's first book was an extensive and still authoritative volume on *hebao* in 2001. "I spent 110,000 yuan to print the book," he recalls. "You can't imagine what a sum of money that was for me. I had just uprooted my wife and two kids from Shanxi back to Beijing, having quit a very reliable job at the railroad. It was such a risk at the time and such a big sum of money but I felt I had to do it. At least if the antiques themselves disappear, the books will preserve their beauty and their stories. They give people access to the richness of their cultural heritage, since more people can afford to buy the book than collect antiques."

Wang has since written six more books and there's a new volume on silver accessories - like jewelry, hair pieces and belts - due out later this year. Through Wang's books, readers can now journey to the many worlds of antiques of common folk: sculpture, ceramics, accessories,

embroidery, drawing and household items.

Wang's pioneering work in bringing these antiques to life for others has coincided with a surge of domestic interest in Chinese antiques. The number of shops at Beijing Curio City has grown from 60 when it opened in 1995 to over 600 today. An estimated 10,000 antique shops now operate in Beijing, with over 3,000 in Panjiayuan alone.

"Over the past five years, more and more of my customers have been Chinese," says Wang. "They're materially able now to afford collecting while realizing the importance of this cultural heritage. Now, the dealers are the ones that can't afford anything at auctions, it's usually the heads of companies and big business people that sweep the antique auctions. I think it's a good sign. It means we're collecting back our own heritage to have a more cultural and spiritual life."

Daughter Wang Xu, 26, is following in her father's footsteps. "I'm not in the business because I feel obligated," she points out. "I really just love these treasures. My brother is just 14 so he's still in school, but he plans to join the family business, too. We grew up surrounded by antiques so we couldn't imagine living without them."

At the end of the day, Wang's worlds in miniature are about love. As Wang himself says, "Each piece is not about the money or profit calculations so prevalent today. It's about the care that went into the making of each piece. Behind the creation of each article is a human story filled with emotion."



A silver pendant, symbolizing long life

I started collecting them," Wang recalls. He accumulated several hundred over the course of the next decade.

Wang's fascination with ear coverings led him to start gathering other traditional crafts. He started collecting *hebao* and now has thousands of them. "These small embroidered bags were part of the everyday



Wang's most precious hebao

costumes of ordinary people starting from the Tang Dynasty and reaching the peak of popularity in the Ming and Qing Dynasties," Wang explains. His favorite *hebao* was one he purchased over ten years ago. "I paid 15 yuan for this bag; it was the most that I had ever paid for anything - I mean in those days, 15 yuan was a lot of money." Wang was recently offered 6,000 yuan for that same *hebao*, but he declined the offer. "You know, it's not easy to find something like this again so I'd rather keep it."



Qing Dynasty Jacket, 130-150 years old. Wang was offered 15,000 yuan for it but declined to sell.



The art of performing magic tricks, or *gucai xifa* has a long history in China. It is part of the 2,000-year tradition of acrobatics, along with the flying trapeze, wire walking and contortion.

Usually involving disappearance and reappearances of small objects, such as balls, the trick climaxes with the transformation of the object into something else, such as a piece of fruit. The performers usually dress in a traditional long gown, which conceals any number of special props. These skills have been passed down for centuries from one generation to the next.



Now you see it, now you don't! Zhan Yinfang demonstrates one of the tricks of his trade.



Photos by Geng Lei

By Guo Yuandan

“Few people know that China is one of the origins of the art of performance magic,” 74-year-old Zhao Yinfang told *Beijing Today* last Wednesday. “What the foreign magicians do mainly depends on advanced technology, and they have innovated in form. In fact, China is the cradle of magic.”

#### Tianqiao jugglers

Zhao Yinfang began learning to perform magic tricks at the age of nine. He lived near Tianqiao, a poor area that prior to the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, was Beijing's main venue for outdoor acrobatics and magic performances.

“When I was young, many jugglers performed at Tianqiao. I remember being amazed at how one bowl could be filled with red beans as the performer drew a circle around it by blowing. I thought it must be done with the aid of an invisible immortal. So I played truant nearly everyday, and helped the jugglers pick up the copper coins the audience threw. One juggler saw I was clever and hard working, and he accepted me as his apprentice.”

According to legend, Lü Dongbin was the god of acrobatics. One day, Lü met a child who was being pursued by several villains. Lü scattered soybeans in the sky, which turned into a group of warriors and saved the child. The child asked Lü to teach him the skill of turning soybeans into warriors, so Lü gave him a magical book. After studying the book, the child leaned how to perform the magic himself and became a professional performer of magic tricks. Since then, those tricks have been passed down from generation to generation of magicians.

Zhao's master came from Wuqiao, in

Hebei Province, which is known as the home of Chinese acrobatics. According to the master, there were originally 140 kinds of tricks, but only 10 or so now are still known. “Firstly women were forbidden to study the art, and parents were also prohibited. And the skills couldn't be taught to strangers, because the masters were afraid that others would steal their skills, and they would be no longer able to earn a living.”

#### Magic with Chinese characteristics

According to Zhao Yinfang, the charm of acrobatics lies in its ability to dazzle and shock the audience. By comparison, magic tricks appeal to people's sense of mystery. “Because the art of performing magic tricks is also, in part, the art of acrobatics, the magic trick combines both physical skills and spiritually.

A magician is also required to have basic martial arts skill, good physical strength and be adept at *qigong*, an ancient system of postures, exercises, breathing techniques.” For example, he might be required to turn a somersault, while keeping concealed in his costume

100 or so kilograms of props.

Besides these such skills, the flexibility and good timing are essential. Unlike acrobats though, magicians usually keep talking during their routine, in order to distract the audience's attention.

Zhao says the main difference between Chinese and western magic is the costume. “I can both juggle and perform magic. When I perform Chinese juggling, I must put on long gown. When performing magic, I would dress in a business suit or tailcoat. Because all my stage properties must hidden under a long gown.”

The props used in Chinese juggling are few and are generally commonplace items, such as chairs, tables, poles, bowls, plates, bottles and jars. During their perfect movements and flexible showmanship, a talented artist can produce bowls of water, or maybe some goldfish swimming in it or a delicious dish. Chinese Rings, Magic Beans, Sword Swallowing, and Iron Ball are the most common tricks in China.

However, western-style magic uses a greater variety of objects and they are often much larger than those used in Chinese performances. It often also depends on mechanical or scientific props, much of which is never seen by the public.

#### The development of Chinese magic

Despite its long history and popularity among the people, magic tricks were never seen in theaters in old China, because it was considered a lower class art. “When my parents found out that I had been learning to perform magic, they beat me. But I just loved it. The first two years as an apprentice, I had to work every day. My master didn't begin teaching me the real skills until the third year. And then I could perform in the street, playing those tricks people enjoyed, and they would give me cash,” Zhao recalled.

“Usually I played some common trick, such as producing a bowl or plate. But for audiences familiar with such acts, I had to do something special, in order to surprise them so they would

give me money. However, the stunt was very dangerous. If it went wrong, it could lost me my life.” Zhao's *Qiqiao Fen Zhu* means a dangerous trick. A small iron ball was placed in his mouth by a member of the audience, and then, at the request of the audience, he would make it appear from his eye, nose, or ears. “It is completely dependent on qigong, every time the ball was covered with blood.”

After 1949, folk performers gained new recognition, and numerous troupes were established in which they could better display their skills. During the Cultural Revolution, however, they again suffered a setback. Many of the props they used were destroyed. “Though the tricks survived, I could perform some routines no longer, without the props. Now one big jar costs some 20,000 yuan, I couldn't afford it at all.”

Nowadays, western-style magic shows pose an even more serious threat to this ancient tradition, and demand is low for jugglers and magicians. “For me, it is not difficult to figure out how David Copperfield performs his tricks. We also hope to innovate our performance, but to put on a show like Copperfield costs a lot of money, and we have a limited budget. And fewer and fewer young people want to learn our skills.

Zhao's nephew is one of the few youngsters learning the art of Chinese magic tricks, and has already performed solo on the theater stage. Zhao told *Beijing Today* with excitement, “I watched *Qu Yuan Za Tan* the other day, [a weekly program on folk performing art forms produced by CCTV], and saw a young man in long gown performing magic tricks, I was thrilled. He performed very well, and even presented some new tricks. I myself feel happy that our art continues to be passed on.”

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By Darlene Lee

Germany first brought contemporary Chinese art to Europe at Berlin's Palace of Cultures of the World in 1993. Two more shows in Bonn followed in 1996 and 1998. "Germany was one of the first places to realize that China had a contemporary culture," observed Sabina Wang, an agent for London's Chinese Contemporary gallery of German and Chinese descent. "Germany was the first country to show Chinese avant-garde art on a large scale."

**Unique perspective**

Behind the scenes of these many cultural activities, one usually finds The Goethe Institute. Operating independently from the country's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the German Embassy, the Institute was established in 1951 and given the task of setting German foreign cultural policy. The Beijing branch opened in 1988 primarily as a language learning center, but rapidly expanded to oversee cultural cooperation and promote the image of contemporary Germany in China.

Dr. Ulrich Nowak, director of the Goethe Institute in Beijing, explained, "Our main principal is that we do not do programs alone. The precondition is that we must always have a Chinese partner. It makes no sense to do it otherwise. We want to build up a network of partners, in fields interesting and relevant for both sides."

**Positive experience**

This long-term bilateral approach seems to set the tone for most Sino-German contemporary cultural collaborations, while the diverse line-up of shows organized by the institute reveals its expansive focus. "We want to make projects available to as broad an audience as possible," said Nowak. "The classical approach is to bring together a German and Chinese team to produce something within a given time, like what Feng Boyi did with his *Right Hand Left Hand* show last year in Dashanzi."

That show, sponsored in part by the Goethe Institute, matched 17 artists from Germany with an equal number of Chinese contemporary artists. To this day, organizer Feng Boyi has nothing but praise for the institute's involvement and the organization as a whole.

He said, "There's a long history of cultural exchange between China and Germany. Multinational cooperative events are rare, but very necessary because bringing foreign artists to China adds something new to the dialogue here. Close interaction is so much more powerful than just visiting a show abroad. For this, the Goethe Institute has been in-

# The Teutonic Edge



Last year's Right Hand Left Hand show at the 798 Space brought together 17 German and 17 Chinese artists.

**Eschewing media hype and flashy theatrics, the German cross-cultural drive in China opts instead for a long-term vision of developing genuine understanding and shared perspectives.**



Crease Study, Right Hand by Sui Jianguo at 798 Space's Sino-German show last year.

strumental, particularly in the realm of contemporary art."

Yang Kaiping, manager of the Creation Gallery, recently oversaw the opening of the first solo show of influential contemporary German artist Gerhard Richter in China. The exhibition, entitled *Survey*, features 26 works selected by Richter himself and is part of a decade-long worldwide tour that just entered its third year. "We've had a happy collaboration with both the Goethe Institute and the German Embassy, so we'll definitely work more with German artists in the future," Yang said.

**Contrasts**

He continued, "Crossing cultural and national boundaries can definitely be a great stimulus for original thinking and ideas. German artists bring a clear articulation of ideas. Behind each piece, no matter how spontaneous-looking, is a carefully-ordered train of thought."

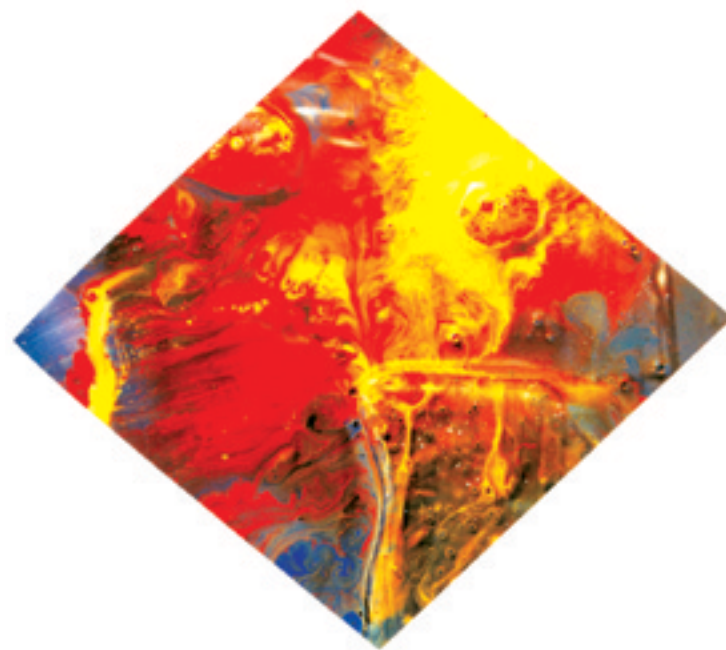
In contrasting the work styles of German and Chinese artists, Feng basically concurred, saying, "German artists seem to methodically take one idea to its logical conclusion, resulting in a lot of depth versus the more explosive but rough expression of many Chinese contemporary artists. The German artists were shocked that it only took me two months to put together [Right Hand Left Hand]. They told me that in Germany, a show of that



Art for the People by Xu Bing was among the works on show at Right Hand Left Hand.

size would have taken at least two years to plan."

One of the contemporary Chinese artists at the forefront of this cross-cultural exchange is Beijing native Wang Xugang, who returned home in 2000 after spending 11 years in Germany. He opined, "Germans are much more focused and sincere in whatever they do. By this I mean they have a sense of responsibility to self, society and others. Today in China, by com-



Gerhard Richter, *Guildenstern*, 1998, cibachrome, 102x116cm

parison, there is less of this."

Dr. Nowak does not seem to think that such differences are necessarily problems. He told *Beijing Today*, "Germans need time to plan, to look for a concept and how to apply it. But the Chinese are much more flexible, they don't need this. So when the two cultures work together, and we must work within this, it gets very interesting. There is much learning to be done."

**Common ground**

While such cultural differences are inevitable, Michael Danner, a German contemporary artist who first visited China in 1996 and had a solo show at the Creation Gallery last year, said that he sees important fundamental connections between Chinese and German art. The key similarity, according to Danner, is the presence of clear philosophies, as both countries have deep-rooted philosophical traditions that have directly influenced artistic developments.

The Creation Gallery's Yang concurs. "The way German artists think is closer to Asian culture than many other places. They think philosophically, with a strong conceptual drive behind the work and a careful examination of ideas, so that the work moves beyond pure emotional expression," he said.

"There is much common ground between German and Chinese contemporary artists in terms of looking for their own identities and recreating their own status. For the Germans, this is has been happening since WWII while for the Chinese, this has come since the Cultural Revolution and especially in the context of the rapid changes occurring now," elaborated Sabrina Wang.

**The future**

The newest in the long line of Sino-German collaborative art projects was last month's opening of the Pruss & Ochs Gallery / White Space in the Dashanzi Art District. The Goethe Institute provided support for the establishment of that gallery, as well as for the concurrent launch of a series of lectures by European artists and scholars at the Central Academy of Fine Arts.

In Nowak's view, there is almost endless demand for such projects in Beijing and the rest of China. "It's almost impossible to have a topic which Chinese audiences do not find interesting. It might be the driest topic ever, one that I couldn't get people to in Germany, but not only is the event in Beijing going to be packed but the people will be knowledgeable, interested and asking questions. It's amazing," he said.

In hopes of tapping into the potentially massive pool of interest outside Beijing, the Goethe Institute has opened six German Information Centers within public libraries around the country. Another two or three such centers are slated to open in other parts of China each year over an extended period of time.

Noted Danner, "I think Chinese-German cultural exchange should be developed much more, so that Chinese people not only know what Volkswagen, BMW and Daimler are, but also know what German contemporary culture really is. In the same way, in Germany we buy goods made in China, so Germans should also know more about Chinese culture. Living in a world where exchange of material goods has become very easy, we should also put importance on the exchanging of spiritual goods and learning from each other."

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## Middle Earth Returns

By Wang Xiaoxiao

The much-anticipated *The Return of the King* finally opens in Beijing cinemas today. Directed by New Zealander Peter Jackson, *The Return of the King* is the conclusion to the fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* based on the books by J.R.R. Tolkien.

The box-office revenue worldwide for the film is expected to reach US \$1.3 billion, while the previous two installments, *The Fellowship of The Ring* and *The Two Towers*, made took in \$1.17 and \$1.26 billion respectively.

At the recent 76th Academy Awards, it won a record-tying 11 Oscars, including Best Picture, an honor shared by two other epics, 1959's *Ben-Hur* and 1997's *Titanic*.

With the legions of darkness gathering, Gandalf (Ian McKellen) urgently tries to rally Gondor's broken army to action. He is aided by Rohan's King Theoden (Bernard Hill), who unites his warriors for history's biggest test. Yet even with their courage and passionate loyalty, the forces of men — with Eowyn (Miranda Otto) and Merry (Dominic Monaghan) hidden among them — are no match for the enemies swarming against Gondor. Their hopes rest with Frodo (Elijah Wood), a tiny but determined hobbit making a perilous trip across treacherous enemy lands to cast the One Ring into the fires of Mount Doom.

According to the China Film Group Corporation, Chinese cinema-goers will be treated to the full three-and-a-half-hour cut, easing fears of some fans that the movie might be shortened. Both the original English language version, with Chinese subtitles, and the dubbed version will be screened at Zhongying Cinema at Xijiekou, Star City Cinema at New Oriental Plaza and other cinemas around town.

## Unstrained Melodies

By Zhang Ran

A series of albums titled *Nostalgia Melody* is helping fan a revival of interest in Taiwan folk music. Released by Jingwen Record Company, the collection contains 60 original songs, including four compilations by folk singers Cai Qin, Sarah Chan, Ye Jiaxiu and Yin Xia, and two collective albums by Pan Anbang, Li Bihua and Liang Hongzhi.

The omnibus is accompanied by a 7,000-word introduction titled *A Record of Taiwan Folk Music*, written by composer Li Wei.

According to the introduction, Taiwan folk music can be traced back to 1977 and the so called "Danjiang Event," when folk music pioneer Li Shuangze called for the production of original music on the stage of a western music concert at Danjiang University.

The Golden Melody Prize, launched in 1977 among Taiwan universities, aimed to advocate local music production. Well-known ballads such as *Ganlan Shu (Olive Tree)* by Qi Yu, and *Longde Chuanren (Descendents of the Dragon)* by Li Jianfu were both recipients of the prize and became extremely popular among the younger generation. A dozen of singers such as Liu Zhengwen, Cai Qin, Qi Yu, Ye Jiaxiu, Li Jianfu became the new idols among the youth.



Cai Qin

By Lun Bing / Guo Yuandan

To mark its 100th anniversary this year, the London Symphony Orchestra gave Beijing music lovers a memorable evening last Saturday, under the baton of Daniel Harding.

Although ticket prices averaged almost 1,000 yuan, there were almost no empty seats at the Poly Theater. The audience clearly relished the opportunity to experience the power of this world-renowned symphony orchestra guided by one of the world's most exciting and highly acclaimed conductors, Daniel Harding.

At the tender age of 29, Harding is already a veteran of the European concert circuit. He was 17 when Simon Rattle hired him as an assistant, and he conducted the Berlin Philharmonic before his 21st birthday. His body language is self-explanatory, without any show of vanity, and he has a very clear interpretation of the featured works, which can inspire the musicians, and kindles musical fireworks.



Daniel Harding

Photo by Huang Liang

## London Symphony Debuts in Beijing

Described by London's Sunday Times as "indisputably one of the world's greatest orchestras," the London Symphony has a long established musical reputation both at home and overseas, however this was the first time for the orchestra to perform in Beijing and also was the only performance in China during its Far East Tour 2004.

The program included Britten's *Four Sea Interludes* from *Peter Grimes*, Stravinsky's *Firebird Suite* and Sibelius' Symphony No 5 in E flat major. The various sections of the orchestra displayed separation and depth, and from the first note of Stravinsky's complete original 1910 version of *The Firebird Suite*, the audience was totally entranced.

## WORLDWIDE



William Hung

### American Idol Reject Gets Record, Video Deal

Only in America could a bad singer become so popular that he gets a recording contract and a music video deal.

Independent music label Koch Records said on Monday that William Hung, who has become famous for his less-than-stellar performance of the song *She Bangs* in an audition for the Fox reality TV series *American Idol*, has agreed to a record deal. Hung was first offered the contract in February.

Koch said Hung's album, tentatively titled *The True Idol*, will be released April 6, and cable channel *Fuse Music Network* said it would air Hung's *She Bangs* music video.



Ben Affleck

### Ben's Jersey Girl Is Raquel, Not Jen

When a film crashes and burns big time as *Gigli* did, the fallout can impact in a big way on its stars, especially if they're re-teamed in a new project. In the case of Ben Affleck and Jennifer Lopez, they are but they aren't. While Affleck stars in Miramax's *Jersey Girl*, written and directed by Kevin Smith (Clerks, Chasing Amy), Lopez has a cameo role as Affleck's wife and dies 15 minutes into the movie. Affleck's real co-star is Raquel Castro, the 9-year-old who plays his daughter. Affleck arrives for the premiere of his film *Paycheck* in Hollywood December 18, 2003. **Hollywood Golden Age Star Frances Dee Dies**

Actress Frances Dee, widow of Western movie hero Joel McCrea and one of the last stars from Hollywood's Golden Age, has died at age 94 after a career in which she co-starred with the likes of Gary Cooper, Bette Davis, Frederic March, Katharine Hepburn and John Wayne.

Her family said on Monday

that Dee died two days earlier in a hospital in Norwalk, Connecticut, after suffering a stroke while on a visit to one of her three sons.

Her career as an actress began in 1929 when Maurice Chevalier picked her to play opposite him in *Playboy of Paris*. And it continued more or less unabated until the 1950s when she retired full-time to devote herself to her children and her husband. She and Joel McCrea, one of the major stars of Western movies, were married for 57 years, one of Hollywood's longest unions.



Frances Dee

### Courtney Love Faces New Misdemeanor Charge in LA

Prosecutors in Los Angeles on Monday filed a new charge of disorderly conduct against rocker Courtney Love stemming from her arrest last October 2 outside the home of a boyfriend where police said she was breaking windows in the middle of the night.

Love, 39, the widow of rock star Kurt Cobain, already faces trial on a charge of being under the influence of a controlled substance stemming from that arrest.

Hours after being released on bail, she was taken to a local hospital for what police called a "medical emergency" and was later charged separately in Beverly Hills with two counts of unlawful possession of prescription painkillers. A preliminary hearing in that case is set for next Tuesday.

The new charge in Los Angeles accuses Love of endangering people in a public place while on drugs, said Jerry Baik, the prosecutor overseeing the case. He said the charge was added to the original complaint in case prosecutors have difficulty making the earlier charge stick.

Reuters, edited by Guo Yuandan



Courtney Love

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By Hou Mingxin

As construction of venues and infrastructure for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games enters high gear, attention is also being paid to the readiness of Chinese athletes. Among the sports being promoted in hopes of having native heroes qualify to take part in the Beijing Games is equestrian, a relatively new sport to this country. While there are few riders at present, the rising affluence of many cities is creating a corresponding rise in interest in horse riding, a situation that could lead to the rapid development of domestic athletes.

The newest chapter in these promotional efforts will come on March 20, when Beijing hosts its first organized equestrian competition this year. Half of the participating riders will be amateurs from the over 30 riding clubs in the municipality.

According to Cheng Yu, an official from the Beijing Equestrian Association and an organizer of the event, most of the amateur participants have signed up simply out of a love for riding, not in pursuit of the prize money.

#### Western regions in the lead

Equestrian developed as an "aristocratic game" in Europe centuries ago, and was only introduced to China as a modern athletic event in the early 1970s, via Inner Mongolia. It was listed as an official event in the National Games for the first time at the sixth running of the Games in 1989. Four equestrian teams, mostly from western China where horsemanship has been long a tradition, participated, according to Cheng Qing, vice general secretary of the Chinese Equestrian Association (CEA).

"The ethnic minorities in western China have made outstanding contributions to the development of equestrian sport in this country. Interestingly, that runs contrary to the economic situation in China, where the poor west lags far behind the east," Cheng said.

He credited Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Tibet as leaders in the development of the sport in this country. Those areas are home to nomadic minority peoples that have centuries of tradition of horse riding prowess. The Kazak and Kirgiz peoples even have the custom of young men and women chasing each other down on horseback as a way of finding a spouse.

#### And they're off...

As China's economy boomed and the ranks of the nouveau rich grew in the 1990s, equestrian clubs began to appear in affluent cities in eastern China. According to CEA, there are currently around 80 such clubs in this country, over 30 of which are located in the Beijing area.

Among the local facilities is

# China Saddles Up

## Equestrian promoted as part of readiness push for 2008 Olympics



Ji Ensi, a rider with the Beijing Shijingshan Equestrian Club, leaps to victory in the jumping event in the 2002 National Equestrian Championships held in Beijing.

the Equuleus International Riding Club, established in 1999 in an eastern suburb of the city. The exclusive club occupies six hectares of grassland and offers horses and facilities for professional training and amateur riding. Horse professionals run demonstrations of horse jumping and provide expert riding lessons.

Facilities include open arenas for show jumping and two dressage arenas where horses are guided through various paces and postures without using reins or noticeable signals. Equuleus also runs the Pony Club, which offers introductory riding lessons to children aged 7 to 16.

Club owner Wang Qiang told *Beijing Today* last Thursday that her club has nearly 300 registered members. According to her, interest in the sport is on the rise, particularly over the past two years.

#### Hurdles remain

While the sport is developing quickly in this country, China is still far behind many other na-

tions in terms of the scale and popularity of equestrian.

Statistics from the CEA indicate there are only seven professional equestrian teams in China, belonging to Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, Tibet, Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and the People's Liberation Army. Just around 3,000 people regularly take part in the sport, and most of them are amateurs.

Another problem confronting domestic equestrian is a lack of studhorses. China is home to just around 80 purebred horses and over 3,000 retired sporting horses brought in from abroad or from tracks in Hong Kong and Macao.

Cheng Qing added that the main weakness of Chinese riders was a lack of advanced training and experience in international competition. The same is true for Chinese umpires, an issue that stands in the way of the sport's further development in this country. China is home to only 16 international stewards, or assistant

judges, and has no international judges, according to Cheng. He noted that at least 150 international stewards would be needed at the 2008 Olympics, and the CEA hoped a majority of those would be Chinese.

#### 2008 a good chance

Last June, two Chinese riders flew to Germany to participate in the qualifiers for the Athens Olympics. Neither made the cut, but it still represented a significant step for Chinese equestrian sports, the first time that any Chinese had entered that level of competition.

According to Cheng, the CEA will take the advantage of Beijing's hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games to promote the development of the sport in the country.

Cheng said equestrian was an important event in evaluating a country's ability to host an Olympics, as it involved many factors and facilities such as transportation, quarantine of horses, isolation zones and veterinary services.

He continued that the CEA was planning to seek corporate sponsors to support the development of the sport instead of relying on state funding and would seek to learn more from foreign examples.

Last week, Jeremy Michaels, director of Equine Studies at Hartpury College, University of the West of England, and a leading equestrian instructor in the UK, came to China at the invitation of the CEA. His mission is to assist the association in establishing a training regime for national team coaches and a system for evaluating domestic riding clubs.

Cheng Qing said the UK, Germany, Denmark and other countries known for their equestrian prowess had shown interest in supporting the growth of the sport in China. At present, there are several professional Chinese riders training in Europe and the CEA plans to send club managers abroad to accrue international management experience.

## 2008 Games May Sport Women's Boxing

Women's boxing may be staged at the 2008 Beijing Olympics, International Olympic Committee (IOC) Women and Sport Commission Chairwoman Anita DeFrantz said Tuesday.

Women will take part in all 28 Olympic sports at this year's Athens Games in August, aside from boxing and baseball, for which the equivalent women's event is softball.

"Boxing will be accepted, maybe at the next Games, sure," DeFrantz told Reuters on the sidelines of the IOC Third World Conference on Women and Sport. "When you consider that women's basketball was not on the program until 1976, there's been an extraordinary change."

DeFrantz said the strategy of winning acceptance for women in all Olympic sports was nearly complete.

In Athens, a record 44 percent of the 10,600 participants will be women, up from 38 percent in Sydney 2000.

DeFrantz said the next challenge was more complex and covered several issues, such as the portrayal of female athletes in the media, marketing and sponsorship in women's sport or sexual harassment.

Summing up the three-day conference's work and efforts to promote gender equality, she told the 600 participants from 137 countries: "The next decade must be one of women taking leadership roles...I wanted it to be yesterday, let's make it tomorrow."

(Reuters)

## High School Hoops Season Kicks Off

By Hou Mingxin

The China High School Basketball League's (CHBL) second season started on March 5, the Ministry of Education's High School Sports Association, the organizer of the league, announced at a press conference held in the capital last Thursday.

The competition will involve 128 teams from 16 cities and provinces and the season will be divided into three sections. The first leg, from March 5 to April 3 will yield 16 provincial-level champions that will go on to the second round, held April 10 to 20. The winners of that leg, representing northern and southern China, will meet in the last stage. The two championship games are scheduled for April 25 and May 16 and will be held at the finalists' home courts.

At the press conference, a representative from league sponsor Nike announced that top players from the league would be invited to attend the company's prestigious basketball training camp. Many international stars, including China's own Yao Ming of the Houston Rockets, have gone through the camp.

Hu Shinjia, vice chairman of the Chinese Basketball Association expressed hopes that the CHBL could become a platform for the development of players headed towards university and professional-level leagues.

## Brazilian Happy to Don Qatar Colors

By Wesley Lei

According to German news agency Deutsche Welle, Brazilian-born striker Ailton, the leading goal scorer in the German Bundesliga, has accepted an offer to play for Qatar. He was expected to travel to Doha to sign a contract this week and make his debut in the national team's World Cup qualifier in Jordan on March 31.

The Qatari team represents a chance to play at the 2006 World Cup for the 31-year-old Ailton, who has scored 20 goals in 22 matches for the Werder Bremen Club, as he is not in consideration for the Brazilian national team.

Ailton would not comment on media reports alleging he would receive a one-time payment of £1 million (\$1.2 million) to take on Qatari citizenship, plus an annual salary of £400,000 (\$495,000) for playing.

"Of course, money is important to me, but it was more important to fulfill this dream," Ailton was quoted as saying in the *Deutsche Welle* report. "The Brazilian team doesn't want me, so that is why I've decided to play for a team which appreciates me."

Qatar is aiming to qualify for its first ever World Cup Finals, but the road will be hard following the team's 3-1 loss to Iran in its Group 1 opener last month.

By Zhang Bo

Pele may still be the world's favorite footballer, but he entered a storm of controversy recently over his choice of the greatest living players. FIFA gave the Brazilian legend the task of picking 125 names for the world soccer governing body's 100th anniversary celebration.

Initially, the list was going to contain 100 names of 50 active players and 50 retired, but Pele told the organization that choosing just 50 names from the past would be too difficult. FIFA relented and agreed to set the number of retired stars to 75, bringing the total to 125.

Last Thursday, the list was officially made public by FIFA at a news conference held in London.

Pele's list includes 15 Brazilians and 14 players from each Italy and France. There also are 13 Dutch players on the list, 10 Germans, 10 Argentines and seven English.

In sharp contrast, there are only two Asian players among the list, Nakata from Japan and Hong Myungbo from South Korea, and just two women, Mia Hamm and Michelle Ak-

ers, both from the US.

The list includes five members of the Brazilian team that won the 2002 World Cup, present stars Ronaldo, Rivaldo, Roberto Carlos, Cafu and Ronaldinho. However, Pele selected only two of his 1970 World Cup winning teammates, Carlos Alberto and Rivelino, sparking wide criticism in Brazilian papers for leaving out Jairzinho, Gerson and Tostao, other stars in what many consider the best Brazilian lineup ever.

In his defense, Pele has responded that there were simply too many qualified Brazilians to choose from. "I did my best," he was quoted as saying in an Associated Press report last Friday. "I asked if we could have 1,000 players but I was told it should be only 100. I could have picked 100 from Brazil, and I tried to make as few mistakes as possible."

Last week, Gerson appeared on a Brazilian sports television program tearing up a piece of paper as if it were Pele's list. "I



Pele stands among some players he chose for FIFA's legends list at London's Natural History Museum last Thursday.

Photos by Photocome

## Pele's Legends List Sparks Controversy

respect his opinion, but I don't agree," Gerson said. "Taking off Zidane, Platini and Fontaine, I'm behind 11 Frenchmen? This is a joke to have to hear this."

Other surprises were the inclusion of Senegalese strik-

er El Hadji Diouf - a virtual unknown before the 2002 World Cup - and Dutch midfielder Clarence Seedorf. Scottish star Dennis Law, England World Cup hat-trick hero Geoff Hurst and Italian striker Sandro Mazzola were

among the omissions.

Even domestic fans have entered the fray, voicing anger about the list's missing star Chinese women's forward Sun Wen, one of the two players honored with "Miss Football" titles by FIFA in 2001.



By James Liu

Long known for the Olympic Center, high-end apartments and a massive auto sales center, over the past couple years the Yayuncun area has developed a reputation as a prime dining hub. Anli Lu, the main road that runs through the area, and intersecting streets Huizhong Lu and Huizhong Beilu are literally filled with restaurants that offer a range of choice almost unequalled in the capital.

One characteristic of the Yayuncun area is the abundance of major chains, from fast food giants to local names such as **Richang**, **Kong Yiji** and **South Beauty**. **Xiaotudou**, **Dongbeihu** and **Daziran**, all branches of larger chains, are the most eye-catching eateries on the southern side of Huizhong Lu, which is also home to the **Dalian Shuangshengyuan Seafood Restaurant**.

Of these three chains outlets, **Dongbeihu** manages to stand out the most with its distinct northeastern feel. The wait staff wear bright floral uniforms and speak loud in endearing *dongbei* accents. House specials include delicious fried spareribs (*fengwei dapai*, 38 yuan for a large portion), pickled Chinese cabbage hotpot (*suancai guo*, 28 yuan) and stewed yellow fish with pancake (*huangyu tiebingzi*, 25 yuan).

Huizhong Lu is loaded with hotpot options, including mushroom and spicy crab versions as well as ever-popular *shuizhuyu*, boiled fish in hot oil. The latter is made especially well at the small restaurant **Feitengyu Xianglaxie**, as the head chef was plucked straight from a popular restaurant in Chengdu, home of the dish.

A few other restaurants on this road offer a smattering of different cuisines, mixing home-style dishes, barbeque, seafood and Sichuan cuisine. One such joint is the sprawling and popular **Yugong Yupo** (see review at right). Diners out for a shot of spice can try **Chuanfu Jiujia**, a 24-hour Sichuan food specialist at the northeast corner of Huizhong Lu, where a large meal should run around 50 yuan to 70 yuan a head.

While Anli Lu is home to an outlet of nearly every foreign fast food chain operating in this country, Huizhong Lu sports a collection of their domestic competitors. **Beijing Beef Noodle King**, **Xiaotudou**, and **Malan Lamian** are all noodle joints open 24-hours-a-day. A bit less popular than these three is **Banmuyuan**, which serves Taiwan-style food. To get noodles of a very different color, check out Japanese restaurant **Jiangzhitian** or Italian restaurant **Romeo**, which offers pasta, pizza and steak. Expect to pay around 100 yuan per person for such Western indulgences.

Heading north to Huizhong Beilu, dining options, such as the **Xi'nan Baochi Restaurant**, a specialist in abalone and shark-fin and high-end Shanghai-style eatery **Meiguixuan**, generally get ritzier and pricier. Yet the most popular restaurant on the street is northeastern-style eatery **Dashike** which serves a delectable version of stewed pork backbones with soy sauce (*jiang jigu*, 25 yuan).

Turning the corner on Anyuan Beili, there is another row of restaurants, including Korean eatery **Tudali** and a three-story complex with Berry Pizza on the top floor and hip Yunnan-style restaurant **Anyuan Wuhao** (see review at right) below.

## Yayuncun Covers All Dining Bases



Photos by Lou Ge / Wenlong

## Seafood for the Masses at Yugong Yupo

By Sarah Bai

There are many large restaurants in the Yayuncun area, and then there is the Yugong Yupo seafood restaurant, a giant three-story establishment that manages to pack out every night.

Yugong Yupo's secret is offering lots of fresh seafood and other dishes, mostly Cantonese style, at reasonable prices and in an interesting format. The restaurant has taken the point-and-shoot concept of ordering to its logical conclusion. There are no menus – instead, diners head to the first floor to pick what they want from large tanks filled with fresh fish and other *fruit de mer* and from a nearby spray of samples of the restaurant's other creations.

The big tanks are filled with all manner of creatures of the deep, from lobsters to trout, scallops to live sea worms, all priced per 500 grams and ready to be cooking in several different ways.

The *chijiao chao hailuo* (small conch stir-fried with chilies and

black-beans) was a decent-sized plate of savory, chewy mollusks, a relative bargain at only 18 yuan per 500 grams. The *lachao shige* (spicy stir-fried stone crabs, 12 yuan per 500 grams) were also tasty but of suspect freshness, as many clams did not open during cooking.

Of the non-live choices, one interesting item was the *egan jue lianggua* (gourd cooked with goose liver paste), which sounded like a steal at 22 yuan. Actual goose liver content was minimal, but it was enough to add a rich layer to the dominant flavor of caramelized onions.

The *yugong haixianguo*, (house seafood pot, 28 yuan), a big pot of shrimp, small squid, oysters and sea cucumber slices boiled with plenty of *suancai*, or sour pickled cabbage, was pretty good, but the seafood was clearly

frozen and the best part of the dish was the rich broth. The hard-to-resist *yanrou xiangcong juanshao* (fried bacon-spring



Fushi juroupai (ribs cooked in tomato sauce, 32 yuan)



Yanjuji (salt-roasted chicken, 38 yuan)



Tonguoyu (fish in metal pot, 42 yuan)

is one of the most unusual schools of Chinese cuisine, in part because it makes use of all kinds of natural ingredients, from bugs and grubs to tree bark and “preserved yak.”

One must-order, off a list of new specials, is the *dianwei yeshanjiao* (28 yuan), a sampler of three different kinds of wild items served cold in distinct sauces. The *qingwapi*, a kind of thin tree bark, is spicy and sharply flavored, the *songshujia*, or young pine needles, are milder, meaty little bundles and the *shuhua*, a floss made of “tree flowers,” shines in a vinegar-based sauce.

Another product all but unique to Yunnan in Chinese cooking is goat cheese, and Anyuan No. 5 offers a few dishes based on this delicacy. The *dali chao rusi* (fried cheese noodles with



onion wraps, 22 yuan) featured nice crisp bacon, soft onion and a surprising lack of grease.

A few small stations scattered around the first floor offer sides of Cantonese-style snacks and vegetables, fancy items such as abalone, and delicious, buttery Indian *paobing* pancakes.

The format at Yugong Yupo is fun, but the service needs work. Servers and managers swarm around and end up asking the same questions over and over. One of these wandering managers obliviously blew his nose, uncovered, onto the floor right next to the table. It's not hard to see why Yugong Yupo has such a following, but the booger fiasco may keep this reviewer from ever going back.

**Where:** Building 4, Anhuili Erqu, Chaoyang **Open:** 11 am – 10 pm **Tel:** 6491 2735 **Average cost:** 50 yuan per person



ham, red pepper and scallion, 26 yuan) features this cheese cut into long strips that look good but are a bit short on flavor.

The *mila luofeiyu* (sauteed sliced catfish with ‘Yunnan’ chili, 41 yuan) similarly sounds appealing but could use a little more punch and stronger flavor from the fresh chili peppers. Overall, Anyuan No. 5 scores on many levels, but needs some slight tweaking of service and food quality to qualify for true excellence.

**Where:** Second floor, No. 5 Anhui Beili Anyuan, Yayuncun, Chaoyang **Open:** 11 am – 2 pm, 4:30-10 pm **Tel:** 6497 9173 **Average cost:** 65 yuan per person

## Health

### Bird Flu Q&A

By James Liu

In response to dampened public appetite for chicken and other poultry as a result of the outbreak of bird flu, an alliance of companies that raise nearly half this country's chickens have made promises that their products would meet stringent hygiene standards in order to ensure their safety. Yet many consumers remain wary of eating and cooking birds. Below, *Beijing Today* has brought together some answers to frequently asked questions about this deadly disease and its implications for the dinner table.

*What is avian influenza? And what is highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI)?*

Avian influenza, or bird flu for short, is an infectious disease affecting birds including domestic poultry and wild fowl. It can be classified into three types based on variations in the toxicity of viruses and their pathogenic affects. One type is highly pathogenic. There is also a type with low pathogenic effects and one that is non-pathogenic. The current epidemic in southern China and abroad is caused by the H5N1 subtype virus.

*What are the channels of transmission of bird flu?*

Transmission can happen either by direct contact between an infected bird and a healthy one or through indirect contact with virus-contaminated material.

*Why is heat a natural enemy of avian influenza?*

The avian influenza virus is not affected by cold but it can't stand heat. It will die in 20 minutes when heated to 40 degrees centigrade, in 10 minutes at 60 degrees centigrade, and in only two minutes at 70 degrees centigrade.

*Is it safe to eat poultry or eggs?*

If poultry and eggs are not cooked thoroughly, any viruses they carry can enter the body and cause illness. However, cooking poultry and eggs at high temperature slashes chances of virus transmission. Whole birds bought at markets with proper quarantine certification should be safe, but remember that people can contract the disease



through direct contact with infected poultry or bird droppings.

*Is it possible for urban residents to be contract HPAI?*

Under normal circumstances, urban inhabitants are safe from exposure to HPAI because the unprocessed poultry and poultry products available in the marketplaces are strictly inspected.

*Does HPAI have correlations with the age, gender and species of birds?*

All domesticated fowl such as chickens, turkeys, guinea fowl, quails, ducks and geese are susceptible to infection. Of these, chickens, turkeys, ducks and geese are the most likely to be infected. So far there is no known evidence of correlation to gender.

*How does one avoid getting HPAI?*

(1) Do not go sightseeing in infected regions.

(2) Try to avoid contact with live poultry and other birds as well as bird droppings.

(3) Purchase only poultry and eggs with quarantine certificates from standard markets.

(4) Always disinfect poultry and eggs by thorough cooking at high temperatures.



## Exhibitions

## Pictures from the Surface of the Earth

A retrospective exhibition of 34 photographs shot by German filmmaker Wim Wenders during travels around the world over the past 20 years. The pictures range in subject from landscapes to Cuban villages, forests and temples in Japan to roads in Australia's hinterland and Israeli seascapes.

**Where:** China Millennium Monument, 9A Fuxing Lu, Haidian **When:** till March 21, 9 am - 5 pm **Tel:** 6851 3322, 6852 7108

## Zheng Zhong Solo Exhibition

Domestic silkscreen pioneer Zheng Zhong creates simple, ex-

perimental prints.

**Where:** Creation Gallery, north end of Ritan Donglu, Chaoyang **When:** March 13-21, 10 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8561 7570

## Art from Francophone Countries

As part of the 2004 Year of France in China, the Alliance Franchise and the French Embassy have organized an exhibition of contemporary art from several Francophone countries.

**Where:** Yan Club, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Dashanzi Art District, Chaoyang **When:** March 13-24, 10 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8457 3506



## Huang Gang Solo Exhibition

Beijing son Huang Gang earned a name for himself in the 90's for a series of Chinese calligraphy works with Tibetan motifs. His work has been shown

in German, France, Switzerland, the US and other countries.

**Where:** Brasserie Flo, second floor of Rainbow Plaza, Longbo Guangchang, 16 Dongsanhuan Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** till March 31, 11 am - 11 pm **Admission:**

free **Tel:** 6595 5135

## Solo Exhibition by Liu Wenquan

Liu Wenquan's oil paintings vividly depict daily life in the Qing era.

**Where:** Wanfung Art Gallery, 136 Nanchizi Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** March 20-25, 10 am - 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6523 3320

## Talking With Painting

Couple Zhao Jinhe and Zhang Yongping expresses their love of each other and life in a special artistic language full of romance and warmth.

**Where:** Fa Fa Gallery, 2 Xiangjiang Beilu, Chaoyang **When:** March 16-31, 9 am - 10 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8430 2587



## Chinese Woodcuts

Woodcuts by Song Yuan, Zheng Xu, Wang Huaxiang, Gao Rongsheng and other artists whose worked has been exhibited abroad.

**Where:** Qin Gallery, 1-1E Enjoy Paradise, Huaweili, north of Beijing Curio City **When:** March 19-31, 9:30 am - 7 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 8779 0458

## The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King

Directed by Peter Jackson, starring Elijah Wood, Ian McKellen and Viggo Mortensen. *The Return of the King* concludes the epic story of the heroic members of the fellowship and shows how through courage, commitment and determination even the smallest of us can change the world.

**Where:** UME International Cineplex, (Huaxing Guoji Yingcheng), 44 Kexueyuan Nanlu, Shuangyushu, Haidian **When:** from March 12 **Admission:** 100 yuan **Tel:** 8211 2851

## Movies

## Red Suit (Hong Xifu)

Director Li Shaohong's story of an modern urban family dealing with the father's unemployment. Starring Song Dandan and Wang Xueqi.

**Where:** Cherry Lane Movies, 29 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang **When:** March 19-20, 8 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 13901134745

## Activities

## Beijing Hikers - Great Wall Spur

The hike starts in a valley and follows an open trail going up the Wall. The high point will make a perfect spot for lunch and panoramic views of the surrounding mountains and other stretches of the Great Wall are guaranteed.

**Where:** Huairou County, north of Beijing **When:** Sunday, meet 8:30 am outside Starbucks at the Lido Hotel **Cost:** 150 yuan for adults, 100 yuan for children **Tel:** 13910025516

## Lama Temple Tour

Take an insightful tour of the Lama Temple (Yonghe Gong), the biggest temple of the Yellow Hat sect of Tibetan Buddhism outside Tibet, starting with

an in-depth introduction to the temple's architecture and history.

**Where:** meet at the Dirty Nellie's Irish Pub, Liangma River, across the river from the Kempinski Hotel **When:** Saturday, 10:30 am - 12:30 pm **Admission:** 60 yuan **Tel:** 8462 2081



## Hilton Kitchen Experience

Part of the hotel's ongoing series of culinary classes, master chefs will teach the basics of making simple Japanese dishes at home. Seated in the kitchen, participants will be wined, dined and entertained as they learn to make de-

licious, healthy meals from scratch, including recipes, shopping advice and other insights.

**Where:** Louisiana Restaurant Hilton Hotel **When:** March 24, 6:30-8:30 pm **Admission:** 250 yuan **Tel:** 6466 2288 ext.1250

## Stage

## Ballet: Swan Lake

The National Ballet of China interprets Tchaikovsky's classic story of a prince falling in love with the Swan Queen, who has been turned into a bird by an evil sorcerer.

**Where:** Beizhan Theater, 135 Xizhimenwai Dajie, Xicheng **When:** March 13, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 180-680 yuan **Tel:** 6834 4384

## Jams

## Face Melting

An evening of hard rock and heavy metal brought to you by No Color (Yede Yingzi), Sufe Garden (Sufe Huayuan), Broken Star (Suixing), and Waves of Babbie (Bolan Tonghua).

**Where:** Nameless Highland, Building 14, Anhuili Area 1, Yayuncun **When:** Saturday, 9 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan **Tel:**

6489 1613

## Desertification

Sand (Shazi) takes the stage with a long blues and rock set.

**Where:** Loup Chante, Chengfu Lu, Shiweiyang **When:** March 17, 9 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6276 7355

## Music



## Liu Huan Solo Concert

Multi-faceted Liu Huan, hailed as China's "King of Pop," is also a university teacher. He scored a huge hit in the early 90's with the theme song to the popular

TV series *Beijingers in New York*.

**Where:** Capital Gymnasium, 54 Baishiqiao Lu, Haidian **When:** March 19, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 280-1,280 yuan **Tel:** 6833 5552

## China National Symphony Orchestra

Conductor Li Xiaolu will lead the China National Symphony Orchestra in a symphonic concert. The program includes *Leonore* by Beethoven, *Forest*, a piano concerto by Liu Dunan, and *Harold in Italy* by Berlioz.

**Where:** China National Library Concert Hall, Zhongguancun Nandajie, Haidian **When:** March 20, 7:30 pm **Admission:** 30-380 yuan **Tel:** 8854 5501

## Language Exchange

Chinese boy, 25, a student in Beijing wants to exchange language lessons with native English or German speakers. **Tel:** 13691476470

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# What's Wat at Angkor

By Joel Kirkhart

Mystery, untamed jungle, faded glory – such are the images conjured by the very name of Angkor. It is one of the greatest architectural creations in human history, yet somehow was abandoned, reclaimed by the jungle and almost lost, a legacy that only adds to its mystique. All of these preconceptions and expectations about Cambodia's best-known tourist attraction are shattered, however, when one actually sees it in person.

The structures that make up Angkor were built between the ninth and thirteenth centuries as part of the capital of the Khmer kingdom during its golden age. The Khmer empire extended over Cambodia and into parts of present-day Vietnam, Burma and even China's Yunnan Province, before it declined and Angkor was abandoned for reasons still not completely understood. The ancient nation's culture was heavily influenced by India, with Hinduism and later Buddhism serving as the state religions. Therefore, Khmer art and architecture are far different from anything that can be found here in China.

The base for a visit to Angkor's splendors is the booming town of Siem Reap, the development of which is fueled completely by the lucrative tourist trade. There is a wide range of accommodation available, from \$1,000-a-night suites at world-class luxury hotels to simple doubles at guest houses for as little as \$3.

There are several options for getting to the temples, all of which lie at least six kilometers outside of town. Cycling is a viable, and cheap, option. Many guesthouses rent banged-up bikes for \$2 a day.

Easier on the rear is hiring a *tuk tuk*, a motor scooter with an open, two-seat wheeled trailer. Tuk tuks go for just \$10 a day, drivers are generally friendly and many can give interesting introductions to the sites in English. Larger groups or those looking for maximum comfort can rent cars, normally around \$25 a day.

The main road to all the sites passes by the central ticketing booth, a necessary stop on the first day of touring. One day tickets cost \$20, while three-day tickets are \$40 and one week tickets \$60. Tickets need to be carried at all times, as guards will ask for them at the entrances to many sites.

Angkor is actually a massive complex of temples and other structures scattered over an area of around 200 square kilometers. These sites were all made from sandstone, the lighter stone laterite, bricks and stucco in feats of engineering that both boggle the mind and explain how they can still be standing after being lost to the jungle for centuries.

The sheer size of Angkor makes it difficult to make a plan of attack, but there are four sites that absolutely cannot be missed.

A good place to start is the largest and most accessible temple, the magnificent Angkor Wat itself. Built in the first half of the twelfth century, it is considered the peak of Khmer architecture. Its design shows both painstaking intricacy and a complex larger plan of stunning, symbolic symmetry, warranting multiple visits if time allows.

The temple is approached from the west along a crowded central causeway. To the sides of the causeway are two shallow pools of water that offer fine views of all five central towers and great angles for photos. A library just in front of one of the pools on the north side of the causeway is one of the many parts of Angkor currently under restoration in a massive campaign overseen by Cambodian authorities with international assistance. A few sites are currently off-limits to tourists, but most of the work is being done on sections of structures, meaning the

rest is completely accessible and the areas under reconstruction do not pose serious obstacles.

Angkor Wat was built in three levels, each successive one narrower and taller than the one below, so that the central tower in the third level seems higher than its actual 65 meters. The first level is worth walking twice, as it is surrounded on all four sides by covered galleries that protect walls with intricately carved stone friezes. The works in these galleries portray epic scenes from major Hindu texts, mostly heavenly battles, the most famous of which is the frieze entitled "Churning the Sea of Milk." The galleries then open to staircases, some very steep, that lead to the higher levels and the striking central towers.

To the east of Angkor Wat lies Angkor Thom, not a single site but the remains of the last capital of the Khmer empire at Angkor. Within the city's square walls lived the king and his court, along with perhaps as many as one million subjects. The palace structures were mainly made of wood and have thus disappeared, but the complex still houses many temples, towers and other buildings.

At the center of Angkor Thom stands Bayon temple. From a distance, it looks like a dilapidated pile of stones, but closer observation reveals four beatific faces carved into each of the temple's many towers. There are 256 of these faces, each nearly as tall as a man and blessed with a delicate, elusive smile. Bayon is small by Angkor standards, but certainly worth two hours of exploration and a few rolls of film.

Over 25 kilometers north of Angkor Thom is the tiny temple Banteay Srei, home to unexpected wonders. Tuk tuk drivers will ask for \$15 dollars for a day to cover the extra distance, but it is more than worth it. This little complex, also called the Citadel of the Women, stands out because it is covered in exquisitely detailed carvings, more astounding in their intricacy than those at any other Angkor site. It dates back to the tenth century, yet what visitors see are the original carvings in the pink sandstone, remarkably preserved and precise.

The site consists of several short towers, nearly every inch of which is covered with carvings of deities, scenes from Hindu scripture or flowers and other natural motifs. Like everywhere at Angkor, Bantay Srei's character seems to change with the hour, but it is best seen in the light of a setting or rising sun for dramatic effect and photographic opportunities.

No trip to Angkor would be complete without a venture into Ta Prohm. This huge complex is the best place to get a feel of how Angkor must have looked before its reconstruction began over a century ago. Aside from some structural strengthening, archaeologists and restorers have deliberately left Ta Prohm wild and under the rule of the massive fig, ficus and banyan trees that have literally taken root in and around the buildings. The ruined temple itself is magnificent, but the stars of Ta Prohm are the trees and their thick, tendril-like roots that shoot down and around walls, through passages and between heavy stones.

It would be possible to hit Angkor Wat, Bayon, Bantay Srei and Ta

Prohm in one day, but that would hardly do any of these sites justice. Three days is an almost ideal itinerary, giving enough time to closely check out all the major sites and some peripherals without getting "templed-out." Serious history, photography or art buffs should consider investing a week or so – there is more than enough at Angkor to reward a longer stay.

All visitors would be well advised to stay on traveled paths at Angkor, particularly at remote sites, as the Cambodian countryside is still littered with live landmines, legacy of the country's decades of war and internal conflict. Another good idea is to pick up a copy of the book *Angkor* by Dawn Rooney, or a similar guide, before starting out. Historical background and logistical advice can help a lot in making sense of images and understanding the cultural significance of the sites.



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## Getting there:

There are no direct flights between Beijing and Siem Reap, but there are daily connecting flights from Guangzhou, Hanoi and Phnom Penh. A return ticket Air Vietnam via Hanoi costs under 5,000 yuan.

Visas can be obtained at the Cambodian Embassy in Beijing or at the airport in Siem Reap.

① The heads on these causeway guardians are recently added replicas, symbols of the great care that has gone into Angkor's restoration.

② Bayon temple features 54 towers, each carved with huge, smiling faces believed to represent a bodhisattva or the Khmer King Jayavarman VII.

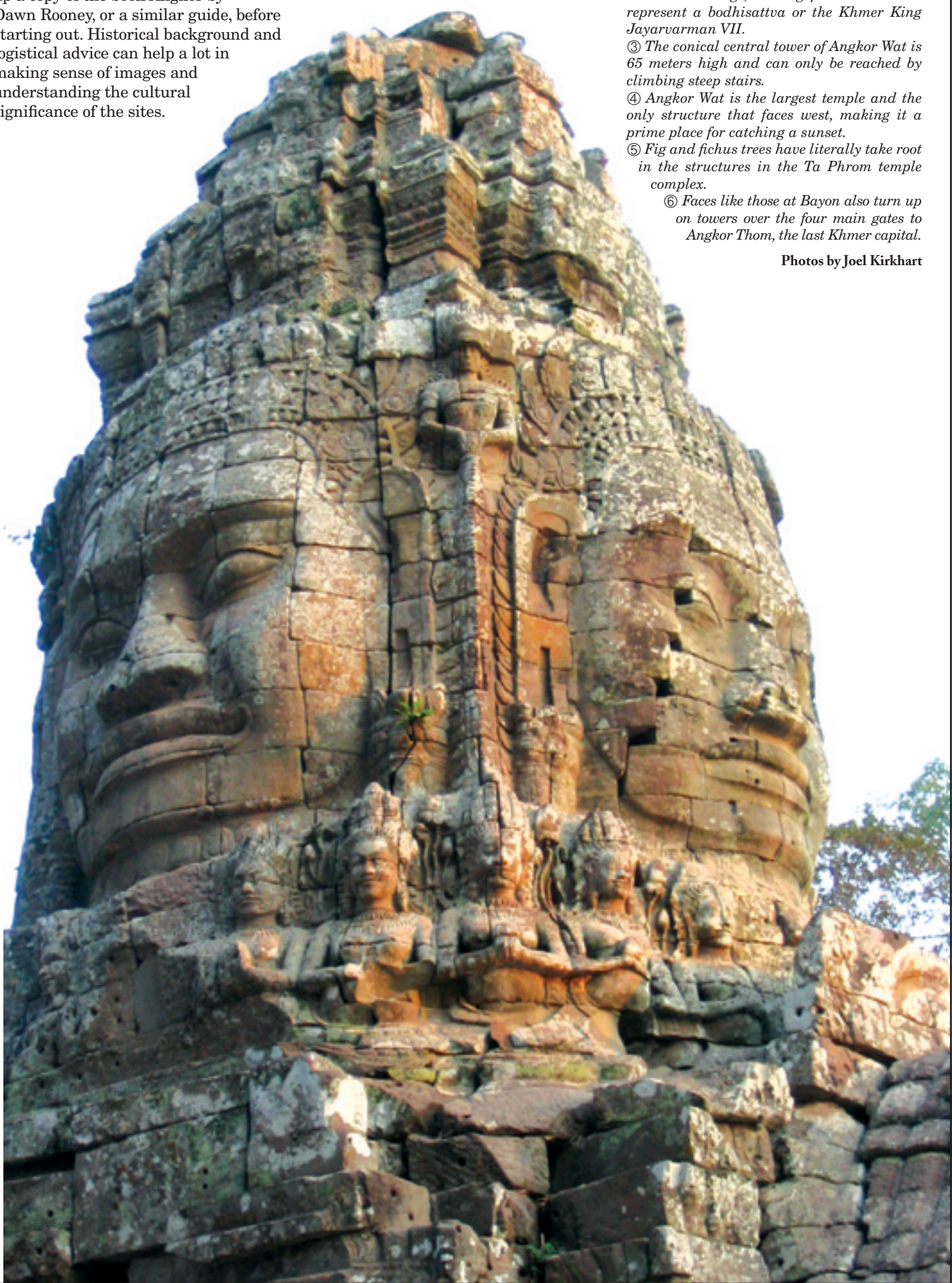
③ The conical central tower of Angkor Wat is 65 meters high and can only be reached by climbing steep stairs.

④ Angkor Wat is the largest temple and the only structure that faces west, making it a prime place for catching a sunset.

⑤ Fig and ficus trees have literally take root in the structures in the Ta Prohm temple complex.

⑥ Faces like those at Bayon also turn up on towers over the four main gates to Angkor Thom, the last Khmer capital.

Photos by Joel Kirkhart



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